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WOMEN OF THE REVOLUTIONARY ERA, or SOME WHO STIRRED FRANCE

BY

LIEUT.-COL. ANDREW C. P. HAGGARD, D.S.O.

AUTHOR OF

"SIDELIGHTS ON THE COURT OF FRANCE," "THE REGENT OF THE ROUES," "THE REAL LOUIS XV.," "LOUIS XVI. AND MARIE ANTOINETTE," "THE AMOURS OF HENRI DE NAVARRE," "THE FRANCE OF JOAN OF ARC," "LOUIS XI. AND CHARLES THE BOLD," "REMARKABLE WOMEN OF FRANCE," &c., &c.

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DEDICATION TO

CHARLES EDWARD JERNINGHAM, ESQ

Dear Charlie,

During the thirty years of our intimacy, under the pseudonym of "Marmaduke," you have charmed the world with a style entirely your own. Your activity, versatility, and industry have equalled those of a Benjamin Constant, a Comtesse de Genlis, a Madame de Staël. It is therefore that, with much affection, I inscribe to you a work in which will be found frequent mention of these agreeable writers of an age not far removed from our own.

Your much attached friend,
ANDREW C. P. HAGGARD

Camp Haggard,
Vancouver Island.
1914.

PREFACE

The present work forms the natural sequel to "Remarkable Women of France," in which the career of The Marquise de Pompadour was carried until after the conclusion of the Peace of Aix la Chapelle in the year 1748.

From that epoch the Revolutionary Era may be said to have commenced in France, with the publication by the *Philosophes* of their immense and largely sceptical compilation the "Encyclopédie," which set men thinking, and the various works of Jean Jacques Rousseau, which appealed not only to men, but to the innermost feelings of the women of the 18th Century, by whose electrical touch the actions of the men were so largely controlled.

In the face of the influence of the Church exerted upon the family of Louis XV., had it not been for the influence of Madame de Pompadour the "Encyclopédie" would never have been published. By the patronage which, while ruling Louis XV. and the State, she extended to Voltaire, d'Alembert, Diderot and their fraternity, to allow them to stir up the spirit of revolt against worn-out institutions, the intriguing Marquise was in a large measure responsible for the French Revolution, which, luckily for herself, she did not live to see.

As in the present volume the career of this ambitious and avaricious woman has been continued until her death, the reader will be able to judge in what other ways she was responsible for the terrific upheaval which

startled the world a few years after the decease of her Royal paramour, Louis XV.

With exception of the Dauphine Maria Josepha, whose influence was a staying one until her early death, the other women whose more or less erratic courses have been described in this volume, lived until after the fearful outbreak of 1789. Then most of them figured largely upon the scene, and some, as Marie Antoinette, Théroigne de Méricourt and Madame Roland, were sucked down in the vortex of the maelstrom of human passions of which their own actions had served to intensify the whirling, resistless rapidity.

ANDREW C. P. HAGGARD

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Women of the Revolutionary Era

CHAPTER I

MADAME ADÉLAÏDE AND POMPADOUR

The daughters of the dissolute and handsome Louis XV. were good-looking women, while, to judge by her picture by Nattier, that impulsive Princess, Madame Adélaïde, was a great beauty. Like her elder sisters, Louise Elizabeth, who married the Infante Don Philip, and Henriette, she was brought up with no sense of morality other than that of her immoral father. Louis XV., having been married to the Polish Princess Marie Lesczynska at fifteen, was little more than sixteen years older than his eldest daughter, the Infanta, who was occasionally astute enough, from interested personal and political motives, to supplant her sister Henriette in the highly-improper rôle into which, in the orgies of his *petits cabinets*, she had at an early age been indoctrinated by her vicious father.

Henriette was pushed by her brother, the fat and unwieldy young Dauphin Louis, who was the tool of

the Jesuit faction, to shrink from nothing so that she might advance the interests of the Church and counteract the influence of that pretty adventuress, Mademoiselle Poisson, who had deserted her adoring husband, Lenormant d'Étioles, to become the King's mistress and Marquise de Pompadour.

After having been for a year or two more Queen than her neglected mother, Madame Henriette fell into bad health, by which time Adélaïde, then aged about sixteen, had, like her sister, frequently been made intoxicated by her father in his nightly carousals in his secret apartments. Naturally, the self-willed Adélaïde was more depraved than Henriette, whose character was pliant, gentle and sweet.

When Henriette died in her twenty-fourth year, Adélaïde, while mourning her with her father, was only too ready and willing to occupy the disgraceful position to which she had been pushed by others as well as led by Louis XV.

For not only did the unrestrained Adélaïde adore her father as "the handsomest man on earth," but she also maintained boldly that there was one code of morality for Princes and another for the rest of the world.

Owing to having heard the Biblical story of Judith and Holofernes, she had indeed when quite a young girl developed extraordinary ideas as to what it was right for a Princess to do. France being at war with England, Madame Adélaïde, with her pockets full of money, ran away from Versailles. When, after much wild excitement, the young girl was found, it was while on her way to join the French Army. Being asked to explain her motives, she said that she intended to send invitations to the lords in the

English army to come to her apartments. When, highly honoured by her proposals, they would come at her invitation, she would cut off their heads one after another when they were asleep!

As she grew older, the passionate attachment of Adélaïde for her father was so little of a secret that all who would gain anything from the young Princess had but to praise the King's looks and qualities to his daughter.

Then, when Henriette died, and she naturally took the place which she had already partly filled during her sister's illness, she became at once the centre of the seething sea of intrigue which for a year or two had been raging round the Court. This was the result of the endeavours of the King, at first aided by the Jansenistically inclined Parliament of Paris, to force the clergy to pay their share of the taxes of the Kingdom.

The riches of the clerics were immense, a third of the Kingdom of France being in their hands, and the Marquise de Pompadour, who practically ruled the King and country as a First Minister, with Monsieur de Machault the head of the Finances, had strongly urged Louis XV. to compel the Church to pay up.

The ecclesiastics were, however, great and powerful, and they not only refused to pay a livre towards the maintenance of the nation, but also indulged in a cruel line of treatment to all of the moderate Jansenist faction, by refusing to give them the Holy Communion when upon the point of death.

From the later years of the Monarch's great-grandfather and immediate predecessor, Louis XIV., there had been a constant struggle between

the Crown and the *conseillers* of the Parliament of Paris. Irreligious and yet bigoted, the " Grand Monarque " had endeavoured to force upon the Parliament a Papal Bull called *Unigenitus*, of which he was himself practically the author, since he and his grandson and heir, the Duc de Bourgoyne, had compelled the issuing of this Bull against his will upon a Jansenist Pope, Innocent XII.

The Parliament had since the time of the death of Louis XIV. without succeeding in imposing his despotic will, consistently fought against a Bull by which mankind was refused permission to approach its Maker in any way save as directed by the arbitrary ultramontane faction. Like his great-grandfather, Louis XV. was irreligious in all his actions, and yet bigoted to a degree where all outward forms of the Church were concerned. In his hopes of obtaining the registry of his decrees for raising money he, however, for a time endeavoured to keep on good terms with those of the Parliament, but even before the death of his daughter Henriette he had found himself in the awkward position of being between two stools.

His neglected wife, Marie Lesczynska, who otherwise disapproved of all her daughters' conduct, agreed with them and the Dauphin upon this one point of religion. Adélaïde, upon Henriette's death, became the head of what was known as the Family Council, the chief object of which, under Jesuit direction, consisted in preventing the taxation of the clergy or their being in any way answerable to Parliamentary authority.

It thus happened that between his acknowledged *maîtresse en titre*, Madame de Pompadour, who

practically ruled the State, and his young and beloved daughter Adélaïde, who sought to rule it through her father, there soon developed a hatred and struggle as bitter as that which arose between the "men of the robe," as the Magistracy of the Parliament were called, and the Church.

Save in this particular matter of religious dogma, however, the Queen favoured the King's acknowledged mistress far more than her daughters. She was never treated with anything but the greatest respect by the Marquise de Pompadour, and, being grateful for this deference, she took pleasure in showing her a mark of distinction which should place her upon an equality with many of her enemies, even those of the Royal Family. This consisted in according to the Marquise the privilege of the *tabouret*, the stool upon which she was allowed to sit in the Royal presence, a privilege never before granted to any but Duchesses and Peeresses of France.

Madame Adélaïde, however, took her revenge, as did her sisters, in a very vulgar way. They made a point of always talking of Madame de Pompadour, even in the presence of the King or Queen, as Maman Putain or Mamma Prostitute!

This disgusting epithet the young Princesses had been taught by the witty and spiteful Comte de Maurepas, the deadly enemy of Pompadour. She had, however, been able to have her revenge upon this Minister, who had long been the King's favourite, for all his open and secret insults, by procuring his eternal banishment from the Court a year or so before the death of Madame Henriette.

The loss of Maurepas had been a great one to the

son and daughters of Louis XV., but, no matter how much the King might be under the petticoat influence of the latter, where the case of the Comte was concerned he proved inexorable, and refused ever to hear of his recall. As for his son, the Dauphin, when he found him to be secretly in communication with Maurepas, the King showed him the greatest displeasure, only through the influence of Henriette relenting so far as to allow his son a seat in the Council of State.

Notwithstanding the fact that she was unable to engineer the return of Maurepas from exile, Adélaïde, by her constant devotion, soon obtained such a hold upon Louiv XV. as greatly to minimise the influence of the official mistress. Madame de Pompadour remained, however, sufficiently powerful at the Court to checkmate a move made by the clerical party, by which it was sought in the most indecent manner to leave the young Princess alone with her father at all hours. The Jesuits told her to ask for a set of apartments beyond and adjoining his at Versailles, where she could remain alone and without the ladies of her suite, these apartments to communicate with those of the King.

When Adélaïde accordingly formulated this request, Madame de Pompadour took up arms. Boldly she attacked Père Pérusseau, the King's Jesuit confessor, reproaching him with the impropriety of his conduct and that of those behind him. She did not spare the priest in her indignation, and told him further that, seeing the King's shameful behaviour and that of his daughters, she marvelled at his permitting either to receive the Sacraments.

In the matter of the apartments she cunningly

made an arrangement to have what she told the King would be suitable ones built for Adélaïde, but managed so well that these took over two years in the building. The Marquise, however, allowed the Princess to have rooms with her ladies on a different floor, which were connected by a private staircase with those of the King.

From these apartments Adélaïde withdrew herself, however, suddenly, when the King seemed about to favour the Parliament in their quarrel with Beaumont, the Archbishop of Paris, who had refused the Sacraments to a dying Jansenist nun. She was at this time but nineteen years of age, and yet was accorded more state than even Henriette, and a far greater income than her mother the Queen. Able to do as she liked, after two months of sulking, Adélaïde chose to rejoin her father when he went for the annual autumnal hunting parties to the Château de Fontainebleau; and no sooner had the King and his daughter patched up their quarrel at that charming resort than the latter appeared supreme.

While Madame Adélaïde would now speak and give orders in the King's name, and say: " We will have this or that line of action followed," it at once became evident that she had won Louis over from the party of the Parliament to that of the priesthood. Indeed, before long there was no longer any question of taxing the clergy—the King did not even dare to insist upon their complying with an order that he had given that they should disclose the state of their finances.

Although, owing to his undue partiality, Louis was now so completely under his beautiful daughter's thumb that in the matter of this great

affair of State she was able to rule him like a tyrant, he laughed at her in other matters. A good musician himself, the King used, merely for the amusement he derived from her uncouth manner of playing upon all kinds of instruments, frequently to insist upon her performing before him and others, who suffered tortures at the unmusical sounds that she drew from violin, cornet or harp. The louder Adélaïde played, and the more out of tune, the more the King applauded, and while he applauded such was her belief in her musical powers that the Princess quite lost herself in ecstasy as she produced her discordant and ear-splitting notes. The Duc de Luynes is our authority for saying that for preference she always played both furiously and loudly.

In considering how the balance was held at this epoch—the end of 1752—between the King's daughter and his mistress, one thing must be recalled to mind. This is that Madame de Pompadour, although still young, had become sickly, and already lost her charm for the King as a woman. Aware of this fact herself, she was content to rule the State, while not only permitting the King full liberty with other women, so that they were not of high rank and likely to supplant her, but even aiding him in the matter of their selection.

By thus accepting the situation, owing to his own natural idleness, Louis was only too glad to leave all important affairs, all selection of offices, in the hands of his *maîtresse en titre*. Yet she too could assert herself and say, "We will do this or that," and the Marquis René Louis d'Argenson says as much in his memoirs. In one place he tells us that

she imagines herself Queen, and gives an instance, as follows: "The Marquise said recently to the Foreign Ministers: 'There will be quite a number of Tuesdays, gentlemen, that the King will be unable to see you, for I do not think that you will come to seek *us* at Crécy.' This *us* assimilates her to the Queen."

Whatever the mutual credit of the daughter, who prevailed upon the King by her charms, or the favourite, who ruled by indulging him in his idleness, the time was now soon to come when the priest-directed intrigues of the former were to sink into insignificance before the important part which the latter was to take in disturbing the peace of Europe. But to bring about this result it was necessary for a far more important woman than either to take a leading hand in the game.

While the King appeased the Parliament, his extravagant mistress, and Monsieur de Machault by exiling the Archbishop to a few miles from Paris, and thus obtained the registry of new taxes upon the country and Church alike, he also appeased Adélaïde and her clerical party. Secretly he informed the ecclesiastics that, no matter how much they might nominally be taxed, they should never be compelled to pay a livre.

There was now an, at all events, outward peace between the Princess Adélaïde and Madame de Pompadour, so much so indeed that the latter came to the assistance of the former. In some strange way, while bullying her father the King, Madame Adélaïde had herself fallen under the domination of an evil-living woman of the Court. This *grande dame*, who was the false friend of the Marquise,

and ever ready to play her treacherous tricks, was one whom, to her regret, she had given the means of access to the King. She was the Comtesse d'Estrades, Mistress of the Robes to the young Princesses. This gay lady, in addition to being a passing fancy for Louis XV., was well known to be on more than friendly terms with the Minister of War, the tricky Comte Marc Pierre d'Argenson, the younger brother of the honest Marquis of that name.

The Princess Adélaïde having confessed to Madame de Pompadour that she was terrorised by the Comtesse d'Estrades, who took from her all her money and even her wearing apparel, the Marquise promised to exercise her influence upon the King in order to induce him to pack her off. In her efforts she was successful. Greatly to the relief of Madame Adélaïde, Pompadour induced Louis to send the Comtesse away, while giving her a large pension to gild her exile from Versailles.

CHAPTER II

MADAME DE POMPADOUR'S PRACTICES

In the year 1753, while England was already committing acts of aggression upon the French in Canada, and Louis XV. had not yet obtained the money that he required in order to arm for the defence of his Colonies, there were strange rumours being whispered around the corridors of Versailles. These concerned the young Princess, who was the principal cause of preventing the King from procuring the necessary funds from the opulent clergy, a great number of whose superior ecclesiastics were members of the higher nobility. It was whispered from ear to ear that all was not as it should be with the bright-eyed and haughty Madame Adélaïde. The Marquis d'Argenson makes various references to these reports. In one place in his journals he mentions the fact of the Princess becoming suddenly ill during a theatrical performance at Fontainebleau. In another he writes more openly, saying that while some people accuse the Cardinal de Soubise, " others mention *another* even less to be named."

The child that Madame Adélaïde is said to have brought into the world is supposed to have been a

nobleman known later as the Comte de Narbonne. M. de Valery, the Royal Librarian, said openly in later years that this report of the young Princess having given birth to a son was true, but although Madame Adélaïde and her sisters always shewed very great affection to M. de Narbonne, he was never acknowledged as her child. Therefore there always remained a doubt as to the parentage of the showy noble with whom Madame de Staël made herself so conspicuous by accompanying him on a journey over a great part of France.

The methods of the Marquise de Pompadour to maintain her credit with the King and to amass more and more riches were even more reprobated by all decent people in France than the lightness of behaviour of the half Polish Princess. For her complaisance in procuring young girls to be the instruments of her Royal lover's pleasures, she was in October 1752 accorded a *brevet d'honneur*, by which, without being given the title, she obtained all the rights of a Duchesse. Upon the 1st November she appeared in public in a chariot upon the panels of which her arms were painted with a ducal mantle and velvet cap. She was universally most unpopular, and being greatly in fear of the Royal opposition of the King's daughter and the Dauphin, could not, it would seem, debase herself sufficiently in order to prevent the dissolute monarch, her lover, from sending her from the Court.

In the pages of the Marquis d'Argenson we find repeated mention of the young girls whom Madame de Pompadour threw in the way of the King's jaded appetites, often acting, it would appear, in collusion with Lebel, Louis' confidential valet, or with Bache-

lier, his former valet de chambre, a man who had become very wealthy and a *grand seigneur* many years previously, chiefly owing to the goodwill of Cardinal Fleury while that prelate ruled both the King and the State.

We select one such mention, under the date of 12th February, 1753, which shows the danger in which the Marquise stood at this time.

" It is assured that the King shares his couch with a new mistress, the daughter of Madame Truchon, and that Madame de Pompadour has herself given her to him, being anxious to preserve her post as *bonne amie*, but that in spite of that fact she will not be long before she is sent away, and that my brother, the Comte, knew perfectly well what he was about in picking a quarrel with her.

" It is Bachelier, the King's former valet, who arranges these little side-shows. He has lately furnished him with a young beauty from Montpellier, the daughter of the wife of the President Niquet, whom I know. The Marquise has just got to put up with all this. Lebel brings young girls to the King in his room with the knowledge of the Marquise. This room of the valet de chambre is known as the Bird Cage, because they catch young birds there. But Madame de Pompadour remains the King's friend, she alone believing herself capable of giving an air of magnificence to the Court, by the encouragement of the *beaux-arts* and by frivolous extravagance. Nevertheless, she is already thinking of a fine retirement, and has bought the Hôtel d'Évreux at from seven to eight hundred thousand livres. My brother founds great hopes on these projects of a retreat by the Marquise. He imagines

that he alone in the Ministry is to the King's fancy. He thinks himself alone invulnerable, through the War Department. He says that whether they have war or peace they will want him. They say against him that he cost a bit dear during the last war. But he replies that the King's compaigns were glorious, no matter at what price, and the bad government was such that one could not stint money in order to succeed."

No one knew better than the Marquis d'Argenson how bad the Government had been during the previous war, since he had himself been the only honest Minister at that time, and had lost his place in consequence.

While he constantly records his brother's actions and sayings, he never approves of his conduct, and criticises him roundly, coupling him at times with the Marquise in his strictures. In March, 1753, he notes that the King has made a mistress of a young girl of Irish origin, named Murphy or Morfil, a model of the artist Boucher for an angel in a Holy Family painted in the Queen's apartments, and in April that he had also bought for a large sum another young girl, the niece of a *coiffeuse*, named Madame Saint-André. The Marquis then returns to the subject of the bad influence that both the Comte d'Argenson and Madame de Pompadour have on this King, who causes "unknown slaves" to be purchased for him in order to fill up his seraglio of the Parc-aux-Cerfs with them. He comments: "Certes! the Marquise is an accomplice in all this, for without her permission the Sieur Lebel would never dare to make these negotiations. Thus the courtiers augment the weaknesses of the Prince to

make their fortunes. The Marquise de Pompadour increases his taste for futilities, my brother flatters his passions of resentment and superstition. M. de Machault serves the Marquise, and satisfies the demands for money and the false methods of finance."

While the methods of Madame de Pompadour are clearly enough revealed by the above, it is interesting to note also how her complaisance instantly ceases to exist when, instead of some little unknown girl becoming the prey of that minotaur of a Monarch, Louis XV., some young lady of rank is found to be setting her cap at him. In his hatred of Pompadour, and anxiety to procure her downfall, the Comte d'Argenson, with the aid of the Comtesse d'Estrades, who was a cousin of the Marquise, contrived to arrange an interview between the King and a charming young Comtesse de Choiseul-Beaupré. When, with her hair all falling about her shoulders, this young beauty ran out from the *petits cabinets* of Louis, to assure the various conspirators awaiting her that all was arranged, that the King would love none but her in future and dismiss the Marquise, great was the jubilation of the enemies of the *maîtresse en titre*.

They were, however, reckoning without their host. Although the Dauphin and the King's daughters all made much of *la petite* Choiseul, congratulating her upon her triumph, this was but short lived. Pompadour, who did not intend to allow herself to be supplanted, soon prevented altogether her admission to the King's supper parties, caused her to be sent back to Paris from Versailles, and, further, forbade Madame d'Estrades to have any

more communication with the Comtesse. Nor was she content with this banishment from the Court of her rival. The Marquise contrived to persuade her crony, the Comte de Stainville, who became the Duc de Choiseul, to interest himself in the matter. He was the cousin of the young lady's foolish husband, who had been flattered instead of shocked at the King's preference for his pretty young wife. The Duc de Choiseul, however, compelled him to shut his wife up securely where she could have no possible chance of gaining further access to the amorous King Louis.

While the King hated literature in all its forms, the Marquise, in order to gain some adherents outside the Court, did indeed, as d'Argenson says, pose as the patroness of the fine arts. Not only did she encourage artists of all kinds, buy quantities of pictures and fine porcelain, establish the factory of Sèvres to make Saxon china in France, but she was the direct supporter of the *Économistes*, the *Philosophes*, who made the era of Louis XV. one of enlightenment, despite the hoggish tastes of the Monarch. In this way, however low in other respects, this supposed daughter of Lenormant, a farmer-general, who was her husband's uncle, did indeed shed a light of refinement over both Court and country.

The Philosophers: Voltaire, Diderot, d'Alembert, Buffon and others, were in the middle of the 18th century starting that immense work the "Encyclopédie," a book which not only noted everything that had been already done in the way of science, but contained many clever if sceptical articles by the first thinkers of the day. It was only

MADAME ADELAIDE

p. 16]

by the protection of Madame de Pompadour against the bitter opposition of the Church that this remarkable work was inaugurated and the first volumes allowed to appear. From time to time it was suppressed, as the clergy got the upper hand, but, despite the occasional utter discouragement of the writers and the editor, who was for a time that clever mathematician d'Alembert, it eventually went on to its conclusion.

In the beautiful picture of Madame de Pompadour by Boucher, that lady is seen half reclining on a sofa. While her dark, dreamy eyes are fixed on vacancy, as though pondering on some abstruse problem, she holds in her hand an open volume of the " Encyclopédie."

The Marquise was the means of introducing Voltaire to the Court, and obtaining him some place by which he was enabled to take a position among the nobility to whose class he did not belong. His bumptiousness and self-assertion, however, offended Louis XV., who treated him with the utmost frigidity, even when he wrote plays intended to glorify the vicious King. His career as a courtier at Versailles did not, therefore, last long, and he was very glad to get an opportunity of taking his departure to the Court of Berlin, where the free-thinking, literature-loving Frederick the Great treated him for long almost as an equal. Eventually, however, quarrels arose between Frederick and Voltaire, of whose spiteful meanness and jealousy of other writers the great Prussian could not approve. Then it was that Voltaire took his revenge by, in the most shabby manner, publishing a " Private Life " of Frederick, his benefactor, who had given him a

refuge when France had become too hot to hold a man with such a dangerous pen.

Having been brought up in her bourgeois home with all the advantages of riches, all the best masters, and having always had the advantage of meeting with poets, authors, and artists of every description, it is probable that it was not only for effect that the aforetime Mademoiselle Poisson, the nominal daughter of Poisson, a fraudulent contractor, encouraged the painters, poets, and Philosophers.

With such a training, one by which her mother always said that she intended to make her a fit companion for the King whom by her wiles she later captured, there is no doubt but that the ambitious girl really developed the artistic predilections of which she afterwards made such an open parade. That she must have had ability of a high order, and also charm, is evident, even if by her excessive vanity, insatiable ambition, and covetousness she was frequently led astray.

Allowed as she was to rule the Kingdom, one is therefore not so much surprised at her occasional errors of judgment as that she made so few. What woman in her position would have done better? Did a luxurious Madame de Montespan, a bigoted Madame de Maintenon, ever do anything but harm to France? The latter especially, a converted Protestant, a woman whose early life would not bear inspection both before her marriage to him and as the wife of the witty Scarron, celebrated her eventual secret marriage to Louis XIV. by a bargain with the Jesuits, which resulted in the drowning of France in the blood of many thousands of Protestants. Month by month, year

by year, she was in receipt of the reports of the long-drawn-out tortures of the Huguenot women by the soldiery, the ravishing of their children from them after their own dishonour and that of their daughters had been accomplished, while their husbands were tied to posts as witnesses and then slaughtered in their presence! And what did Madame de Maintenon say then? That "God works by all methods"! What did she do? By the official commendation of the King's Government at Versailles, she encouraged the butchers of the Dragonnades to go on with their bloody work of murdering those in whose faith she had been brought up in girlhood!

Even if, as we shall shew presently, the Marquise de Pompadour was one of the causes of a war which plunged Europe in blood, she was never the author of such untold cruelty to those of her own country; and, after all, who knows but that the Seven Years' War would have taken place without her? It would not have been a Comte d'Argenson, a Séchelles, or any other Minister that would have prevented it. The Marquis d'Argenson describes his brother and his associates in the Ministry, de Puysieux and de Séchelles, as "old worn-out invalids with worn-out brains." A great French writer of the last century, after, perhaps with reason, describing Madame de Pompadour as "*entremetteuse et racoleuse, pourvoyeuse de petites filles*," proceeds to abuse her more roundly. His hatred is evidently very great for the Marquise, when he describes her as follows: "A woman with a forced education which had taught her like a monkey, who never rose higher than the level of an agreeable femme de chambre,

who possessing some little talents can serve as a lining to the theatres of society. Servile, impertinent, from both sides she possessed this groundwork of domesticity. A consumptive songstress and colourless kept woman, faded from the beginning, soft, she was only fit to enervate, loosen, dilute, spoil everything, make everything unclean and unhealthy."

Considering the above, sentence by sentence, does not the description appear unduly biassed? A product of her time, and having risen by fate and ambition to a height that was more lofty than that of a Queen, what could the woman do but endeavour to maintain herself upon her seat? And surely her methods were no worse than those of the Duchesse de Châteauroux, one of the four de Nesle sisters, who were all of them the King's mistresses before the Marquise.

There must be some reason for all this unmeasured abuse, and it takes but little searching to find that reason. It is that, while the four noble ladies of the family de Nesle were opposed to the Austrian policy of France, Madame de Pompadour, from reasons that we can forgive, followed another line and formed the Austrian Alliance. Thus, instead of fighting with Prussia against England and Austria, we find France flouting her good ally Frederick the Great and spending untold sums as subsidies to support Austria as her ally in a war against England and some of the German States, including, of course, Hanover, of which George II. was the ruler.

That is all! This is the reason why Madame de Pompadour is described as having so little talent.

Even if she had none, as ruler of a great State, she could not have been worse than the other Ministers of the day, as described by the pen of the trustworthy Marquis d'Argenson.

Let us then be fair, and while conceding that the Marquise was a bad and avaricious woman, yet give her the credit for not having been absolutely effete, useless, and brainless. She did much for France, after all, when she encouraged the Philosophers, and in an epoch of mistresses there was not another Royal mistress of the time of either Louis XIV. or his successor who had brains enough to do as much as she.

The friend of Madame de Pompadour was the Abbé de Bernis. He was a charming Abbé without any benefice and appointment, so says Voltaire, save that of being the Abbé of the Marquise while she was still merely Madame d'Étioles. We may mention, by the way, that Voltaire frequently is rude enough to describe the lady as "*la grisette.*" That amiable man of the world, Bernis, who was also Comte de Lyon, remained in Pompadour's pocket, and perhaps partly in that of her cousin, the Comtesse d'Estrades, after the accession of *la grisette* to rank, fame, and fortune. When Louise Élizabeth de France, the Infanta, who after 1748 was the Duchess of Parma, came to Versailles on one of her periodical visits, that lively eldest daughter of Louis XV. appropriated the delightful Abbé Bernis to her own share. But the Infanta, unlike her sisters, had formed an alliance with Pompadour. *La grisette*, the Abbé de Bernis, and the Infanta therefore remained on the most excellent terms with one another, and the two former were most anxious

to advance the interests of the wife of Don Philip, which until the Peace of Aix la Chapelle in 1748 had been, again unlike those of her sisters, anti-Austrian.

Four years after this peace the Hapsburg Empress Maria Theresa, wife of Francis, Duke of Lorraine, who had been elected Emperor of Germany, could no longer rest in quiet under the abiding sting of the losses of her territory to Frederick the Great in the War of the Austrian Succession. She was now firmly on the throne, as Archduchess of Austria and the Low Countries and Queen of Hungary, while her husband and father of her sixteen children, as head of the Empire, was the greatest potentate in Europe.

Maria Theresa, however, hated Frederick II. of Prussia with a deadly hatred, and was determined to tear from him her lost Province of Silesia. But how was this to be done? He was very strong, and, despite the evil tricks played on him by the French Court in the recent wars, still known to be at heart a very good Frenchman.

The brilliant Kaunitz, a Prince of the Empire, having been sent as Austrian Ambassador to Paris, was closely followed by the Infanta from Parma, where she left her husband, who bored her no less than everything else in connection with the wretched little Italian Principality, which had been flung at her as a bone to a dog at the time of the peace.

Kaunitz soon ingratiated himself into the good graces of the Infanta and Bernis. Above all, he did not neglect to pay all appropriate attention to the Marquise. Then he returned to Vienna and talked matters over with the Empress Maria Theresa, who

determined to approach the Marquise in person, to gain her to her interests by treating her as a friend.

During his stay in Paris, Kaunitz had endeavoured, by big promises, to win over the three persons above mentioned, well knowing that to gain Pompadour was to gain Louis XV., and that notwithstanding the great influence of the Comte d'Argenson, who worked constantly with the Jesuits against the Marquise.

Pompadour had contrived to send her dillettante, gay and poetical friend Bernis as Ambassador to Vienna. She was, therefore, perfectly aware of the hopes and aspirations of the Queen of Hungary before Maria Theresa opened up negotiations with her directly, first through Kaunitz, and later through that soldier of fortune and diplomatist, Stahremberg. Before we consider further the extraordinary behaviour of the Archduchess-Queen-Empress in putting herself upon a level with a woman whom her husband, the Emperor Francis of Lorraine, described as a courtesan, it is necessary that we should take a further glimpse into the career and position of the Marquise just previous to and at this critical moment in French history.

CHAPTER III

POMPADOUR'S COUSIN THE EMPRESS

THERE appears to be little doubt of the fact that Jeanne Antoinette Poisson was born in the year 1720, although, with pardonable feminine vanity, she always gave the date of her birth as two years later. Thus, when, after her wiles in fluttering about like a butterfly in cherry-coloured phaetons and sky-blue robes before Louis XV. in the forest of Sénart, she became his mistress, the then Madame d'Étioles was twenty-five years old. This was immediately before the battle of Fontinoy, in 1745, Louis having taken her with him to the camp before the enemy.

During the few years after that battle, Madame d'Étioles, having blossomed out into the Marquise de Pompadour, continued to delight the heart of the handsome King, both by her beauty and her versatility. Her unbounded extravagance, both in dress which enhanced her beauty and in all other matters, in no way disconcerted the King. It was the people who paid for it all, and little cared Louis XV., whom those mistaken people had fondly termed "*le Bien-Aimé*" when, after a terrible illness, he had discarded that bewitching *grande dame* the Duchesse de Châteauroux.

The Duchesse had died directly after she had haughtily consented to receive the King again upon his agreeing to punish her enemies. When she was succeeded as the official favourite by a mere bourgeoise, the Court had grumbled terribly. No trick on the part of the courtiers, of either sex, was too mean or low in order to discredit the low-born Marquise, the creature whom the Monarch had selected as successor to a lady whom all believed to be the daughter of Louis de Condé, a Prince of the Blood very near to the throne.

The Marquise, however, had wit, education, sang well, played, painted and engraved, and, above all, proved herself to be remarkably clever in the art of amusing. Whether at Versailles or Fontainebleau, at her Château de Crécy or her gorgeous Château de Bellevue, she constantly delighted the blasé King, and even the Court, by her theatricals, in most of which she took a leading part, and all kinds of other entertainments. In these no expense was spared, while the animation and *verve* of the Marquise made everything that she undertook a success.

While the bodily health of the lively Jeanne continued strong and her beauty undeniable, the King remained charmed with his last acquisition. He did not, it is true, ever love her as he had Pauline Félicité de Nesle, but then one could not expect Louis XV. to really love more than once in a lifetime. He was a man of many pleasures and liked variation, and in Madame de Pompadour he found plenty of variation and continual pleasure. For she worked hard, this low-bred woman, to maintain herself in her position at the Court as the official mistress, and astonished by shewing that she knew how

to make of herself not one but half a dozen women able to play all parts. To Louis XV. the Marquise indeed appeared in the light of the "*Bonne à tout faire*" of the amusing if *risqué* French story, who fulfilled all the needs of the country gentleman, by making his bed, milking his cows, grooming his horses and tilling his garden, while never refusing to perform any service required, no matter of what nature it might chance to be.

As a *bonne à tout faire* Madame de Pompadour excelled. When, after a time, during which he had been moderately faithful to his beautiful favourite, Louis found that her health was not strong enough to stand the almost superhuman calls that she made upon it to satisfy his every whim, he yet felt that he could by no means do without her. He still would not, therefore, discard his pretty favourite, even if rarely continuing to enact the part of a lover towards her.

Indeed, Louis felt that he could not do without her if he would. For gradually, by the exercise of her ability and consistently indulging the King in his inherent laziness, the pretty *bonne* had transferred the heavy burden of State from his broad back to her own frail shoulders. Delighted to be relieved of the greater part of the trouble of government, bored to death by the constant squabblings of the Parliament, the Jesuits, and the clergy of the kingdom, worried by the courtiers all asking for favours, and the Ministers, who all pulled at him different ways, the King, although often in secret, threw all of these burdens in a lump upon the back of his good *bonne*, the agreeable woman who would so willingly shoulder them for him.

It was from about the end of the year 1752 when, neglecting the fair Jeanne altogether as a woman, the King began to enact the part of a butterfly constantly in search of some newly-budding flower of peculiar freshness and beauty, that the jealous courtiers thought that they saw their chance of getting rid of the woman in whom they had been compelled to recognise a mistress, the dispenser of all favours.

But once again the scheming Marquise proved too much for those who hated her. Good *bonne à tout faire* as she remained, when the vicious Louis became weary of one little maiden and said that he required another, did Jeanne ever play the jealous woman, sulk, or make a scene? Far from it! she gave him the house in the Parc aux Cerfs as a place of assignation and seraglio. She herself lent an active hand in the assembling within its walls of youthful houris of the greatest beauty, who became the monarch's playthings for a short time, until pensioned and sent away, with, too, an endowment for their child, if they had happened to become mothers.

Although the greatest regret of the Marquise was that she did not herself bear a son to Louis XV., she was careful never to shew any resentment when, as in the case of *la petite* Morfil, these others were more fortunate. She interested herself kindly in the young mothers, procured them nurses at the critical time, saw that the children were duly baptised, and often eventually procured a husband of respectable birth for the discarded beauty. The young Murphy or Morfil was in this manner supplied with an officer in the army, a gentleman of the name of d'Ayac, at

the same time as her seventeen-year-old sister, another model for Boucher's angels, replaced her in the Royal harem.

It thus happened that during the three years 1753—1756 the Marquise continued firmly to hold her place. Instead of there being any question of her retirement, as so fondly hoped by the Comte d'Argenson, her favour augmented. The King had even the effrontery to ask the Queen to receive his *maîtresse-en-titre* as her *Dame du Palais*, nor could Marie Lesczynska refuse her husband's command to accept his favourite about her own Royal person.

While, therefore, for three years Louis had ceased to have any love for the Marquise, he had retained for her the custom of absolute confidence as his good and complaisante friend, as a *comédienne* endowed with all the graces of experience. It was in February, 1756, that the King thus provided what he considered as an honourable retreat for Madame de Pompadour from her functions as his official mistress, while retaining her as his favourite in the broader sense. Such was her power, however, that the Marquise yet remained strong enough to prevent any *grande dame* from ascending the steps of the official office from which she had descended, and it was this very strength which made her all the more hated by the numerous ladies of noble rank struggling to step into her shoes. Thus she absolutely defeated a scheme of the Duchesse de Mirepoix to give her niece, the newly-wed Comtesse de Cambis, to the King.

More and more openly was augmented the political power and credit of the Marquise. Having become the centre of the "*consolations royales*

pour les affaires," she served as the control of the Ministers, and, above all, of her enemy Comte Marc Pierre d'Argenson. He hated her more than ever after she had sent away Madame d'Estrades from the Court, but he still visited this lady openly in a house which she had taken near at hand after her exile from Versailles. In spite of his thus braving the displeasure of the Marquise, who knew that he only employed his time with Madame d'Estrades in abusing her, Pompadour could afford to sit by and smile. For she, like everyone else, had at length learned that it was entirely out of the Comte's power to injure her, that, flatter the King as much as he might, before acting upon the suggestions of the War Minister, the monarch would resort to his *bonne amie* for counsel.

The time had now come when, in the absence of the King, the Marquise often presided at the Royal Council. There she had closely associated with her, her old crony M. de Machault, whom the Comte had some time previously been successful in causing to resign the Ministry of Finance for that of Marine. Unintentionally d'Argenson had then done Machault a good turn, as with his two offices of the Marine and Keeper of the Seals, he held an equally honourable and responsible position, and one in which he was far more unlikely to make himself hated than when at the head of the Finances.

At the time that, very gorgeously arrayed in gala robes, the Marquise, to the disgust of the very noble ladies her associates, entered upon her first week of duty in the virtuous Queen's service, she also astonished the world. She suddenly became devout, caused a tribune to be built for herself in a

fashionable *couvent de penitence* and went to confession. To the horror and scandal of his fellows, the Jesuit Father de Sacy admitted Madame de Pompadour to penitence. She, however, not only declared that she intended henceforth to lead an irreproachable life, to follow all the exercises of religion and to practice charity, but threw out strange hints. These were to the effect that she intended to bring about a reconciliation between the ill-treated Queen and her husband, and to do still more. She intended, so said the immaculate Marquise, to convert the King! The Court listened, stared, scoffed and wondered. The reports of the pious behaviour and intentions of Madame de Pompadour went far—indeed exactly as far as this good actress intended, namely, to the Court of Austria at Vienna, where they came as balm to the ears of Maria Theresa. For the Empress was somewhat at cross purposes with that very lively individual, her husband Francis, and it was all about the Marquise de Pompadour.

In order to win France over from the Prussian alliance, and, further, to make of her an ally, the elegant Kaunitz had posed as being very much of a Frenchman. He had admired the Court of Versailles, been enchanted with Mesdames the Princesses, listened with exactly the proper amount of gravity and gaiety to Louis' stories of his little women, and paid great court to the Infanta and Madame de Pompadour. He imagined, so he told the Empress upon his return to Vienna, that he had accomplished a great deal, but he was not yet sure of the Marquise. Her leanings were, he feared, still towards Frederick II., who appealed to her for

several reasons. Among these were his literary tastes and his hatred of the Jesuits.

"Nevertheless," Kaunitz added, "my promises of the Netherlands as a Kingdom to be given to the Infanta have had a great effect. I think that the woman is coming over to us."

"Did they believe that you meant it seriously?" enquired her Imperial Majesty.

"The Infanta believed, because she is tired of being merely the Duchess of Parma, and the Abbé de Bernis believed because she has him in her pocket. There is, therefore, no trouble to be feared on their account, Madame. But neither of these is the King of France. We can look upon him in a sense as being the Marquise de Pompadour!"

"Yet, did you not also fan the ambition of Madame Louise Élizabeth? Did you not tell her that she shall have that ambition satisfied, that my son, the Archduke Joseph, shall be given to her for her young daughter Isabelle, that he will probably be elected Emperor after his father, and that thus will her daughter one day hold my great position? Surely, even that heathen of a King of France would be moved by such a glorious perspective?"

"I said as much upon many occasions, Madame, but, although Madame l'Infante was convinced, the King's mistress merely listened politely. Therefore, the very Christian King is not yet convinced, and so we will not yet, if we are wise, Madame, reckon upon the French alliance."

"Oh, but that courtesan of a woman must be won over!" replied the choleric Empress testily, "and if you, my good Kaunitz, have not had the brains to do it, I will find them for you. For I must have

back my Silesia. Still—still, you know these French creatures better than I do, what do you suggest? ''

'' A little flattery from you, Madame, a little familiarity even, and, if I have judged her aright, that Pompadour woman will be in such a seventh heaven of delight that if you were to ask her to stand on her head before Louis XV. and all the Court of Versailles she would do it. As for a mere reversal of all the traditional policy of France from the days of Henri IV., that will go for nothing. She will lead her hog of a King by the nose in the direction we wish, and another Royal nose, in the direction of Prussia, will then soon be very much out of joint indeed.''

'' Is that all! I see that you are really not such a bad diplomatist as I thought. Bring me a pen, Kaunitz; to get back Silesia I will treat the graceless baggage as though she were my sister-Queen.''

After scribbling hastily for a few minutes, the Queen-Empress pushed her letter across the table to the astute Prince. '' Will that do, think you, my friend, or must I say more? ''

'' I think that will do, as a beginning, Madame,'' replied Kaunitz, cautiously, '' a letter from your Royal hand will be indeed gratifying, but it might have been commenced in a little more friendly style. However, we will send it and see what results.''

The letter was duly sent to Madame de Pompadour, when that lady was indeed greatly gratified by the immense honour shewn to her. She immediately began to throw over the old predilections in favour of Prussia, and matters were placed by her

MADAME DE POMPADOUR

before Louis XV. in a manner to make him see the great advantages that were likely to accrue to his daughter Louise Élizabeth from an alliance with Austria.

Affairs were going on smoothly enough, when interference came from an unexpected quarter. The Emperor Francis I., returning to Vienna from Germany, learned what was going on. He rarely interfered with the Queen-Empress in any matter concerning her own dominions, but for once he put his foot down.

"My good spouse, I will not say more about the impropriety of your communications with this low woman than that it is most unseemly for one of your known piety to have anything whatever to do with a person who is not even reconciled with the Church. The creature is known to be a perfect heathen, as bad as Frederick II. himself, a follower of this atheistical new school of so-called Philosophers. With an ungodly person of that sort it is evidence that the Empress can hold no sort of intercourse, no matter what may be at stake. Unless she should take a sudden and unexpected turn for the better, I must insist that the negotiations come to an end."

It was when Kaunitz sent to her the report of the attitude of the Emperor that the *maîtresse-en-titre* of Louis XV. suddenly became devout—so devout that the worthy Perè de Sacy admitted her to penitence.

At the Court of Versailles, however, the Marquise de Pompadour cleverly allowed it to be understood that it was owing to the good and pious example of Queen Marie Lesczynska that she had been suddenly moved to take such a sudden and deep interest in

" revealed religion." While she was thus becoming more acceptable to the good-hearted Queen of France, the news of the conversion of the Marquise flew to Vienna, with the result that the Emperor Francis—himself a scapegrace of the deepest dye—at once withdrew the embargo which, for the mere sake of appearances, he had thought fit to impose upon his wife.

Thereupon, after consulting with Kaunitz, Maria Theresa wrote another letter to Madame de Pompadour. As the wily diplomât read it he smiled grimly. He read aloud the first words of the Empress to the courtesan: " Chere amie, cousine!—Dear friend, cousin." " Yes, Madame, that will do the trick, I need read no more. France is ours "! Folding up the letter, he sealed it, and said: " I suppose, Madame, we will send this to the Marquise by a special envoy? The Marquis of Stahremberg will do, I think? " The Queen-Empress nodded assent, and Stahremberg was duly sent with the letter and full powers to negotiate on behalf of Austria.

The Marquise was now indeed in the seventh heaven of delight. To be thus addressed by the proud Empress! Only to think of it!

The part that Louis XV. played in the negotiations with Stahremberg was merely nominal. Madame de Pompadour and the Abbé de Bernis signed on the part of France, nominally agreeing, however, merely to a defensive alliance, although the King had wished that the treaty should be for an offensive and defensive alliance with Austria. Bernis and the King's mistress moreover cautiously only promised 24,000 French soldiers as an aid to

Austria. This provision, as that for a merely defensive alliance, was afterwards disregarded.

Thus, by the signature of a King's mistress at Versailles, was inaugurated the Seven Years War. In the joy of her achievement, the Marquise forgot her newly put on piety, and invited the King to her Château of Bellevue, where he stayed with her for several days.

CHAPTER IV

POMPADOUR AND THREE ROYAL LADIES

Madame de Pompadour had made of her amiable friend Bernis a Minister of Foreign Affairs, but with Machault there soon developed a slight coolness. For the Keeper of the Seals, objecting to the immediate levy of 45,000 troops for the aid of Austria, instead of the stipulated 24,000, began to associate himself with the Comte d'Argenson in his jealousy of the Marquise. That lady was, however, now gaining a new and powerful adherent, in the person of the Comte Étienne de Stainville. He came from the Duchy of Lorraine, which country was now ruled over by the jovial ex-King of Poland, Stanislas, the father of the Queen of France.

At the age of thirty-seven, Madame de Pompadour made the Comte de Stainville, with whom she became on affectionate terms, a Lieutenant-Général in the French Army. She sent him on various embassies, and very soon pushed him further up the ladder. Thus Stainville became Choiseul, Duc et Pair de France.

While advancing this Lorraine noble so rapidly, the Marquise also found it to her interest to strongly support the greatest rake in France—the man who made any great lady of the Court the object of the

jealousy of the others by according to her his greatly contested favours. This was the Maréchal Duc de Richelieu, who was made Commander-in-Chief of the French Army sent to attack the English in the island of Minorca. There he took Port Mahon, after displaying both skill and gallantry in his siege of the place, which was bravely defended by the aged General Blakeney with a vastly inferior force.

It was in a great measure on account of the immense self-satisfaction and constant insolence of demeanour of Richelieu, which was tolerated by the King, that the Marquise recommended him for this command, one by which the name of the dissipated Duc was associated with the one brilliant success of the French arms during the war. The English Admiral Byng had attempted to oppose the French fleet under la Galissonière, upon which Richelieu sailed to Minorca, but Byng was defeated and fled, and, as all know, was shot subsequently as a punishment and "*pour encourager les autres.*"

The navy of England was weak at this time, owing, it was said, to the waste of money by the Hanoverian King George II. upon his low Dutch mistresses. It would, therefore, have been far more to the advantage of France to have confined her operations against England to a maritime war, instead of joining Austria to fight against both Frederick II. and Hanover on land.

Having, however, yielded to the flatteries of Maria Theresa, the Marquise shewed no disposition for half measures, and she soon became one of a league of four women, all of them determined to crush the Prussian. For when the witty Frederick heard of the alliance being arranged against him, he in-

dulged in some very biting and coarse pleasantries, which travelled as they were meant to, and stung as was intended.

These four women were the Empress-Queen Maria Theresa, the Empress Elizabeth of Russia, Maria Josepha of Austria, wife of Augustus II., Elector of Saxony and King of Poland, and the Marquise de Pompadour.

Maria Josepha, wife of the ruler of Saxony and Poland, was not only the mother of the wife of the Dauphin, but the niece of the Empress-Queen, and she was, if possible, even more envenomed against the Prussian King than her aunt.

It was, therefore, felt Frederick, to kill two birds with one stone, both France and Saxony, to invade this latter State. This he did with his usual alacrity, and with great joy and gaiety in his heart, immediately pouring an immense army into Saxony. The great Frederick set about this invasion with the more cheerfulness as he was in possession of a secret document, by the terms of which the four women above mentioned were arranging to annex and divide his dominions. Two, he thought, could play at that game of annexation, and had he not already taken Silesia? Singing, writing poems, playing the good flute which replaced that which his choleric father Frederick William I. had formerly broken over his head, this gallant representative of the House of Brandenburg marched along. At the same time, while about to injure as much as possible his old friend France, which was playing him such a shabby trick, Frederick showed that he was still well-disposed towards Frenchmen. In spite of Voltaire's recent ingratitude for past favours, he once more

honoured the poet, sending his sister to see and make much of him, and causing his *Mérope* to be played in Berlin at the Opera.

Although a free thinker, a Philosopher, Frederick ruled over a Protestant State, and he had already greatly assisted the Protestants of Saxony in a time of famine. Although their Queen-Electress Maria Josepha, who hated him so, was a Catholic, he did not therefore expect any very bitter feeling to be displayed against him by the subjects of the State which he proposed to commence by subjugating, no matter what the four women and Europe behind them banded in arms against him might do afterwards. How great was his success, and how speedy! Before long, while Augustus II. was in flight and his spiteful wife a prisoner, Frederick II. had actually enrolled the whole of the Saxon army under his own standard, clad in his own uniforms, which he had prepared in advance in his confidence of success. Moreover, the débonnaire warrior-King was even before long condescending to charm the conquered Saxons, by performing for their benefit upon his beloved flute on the stage of the Opera House at Dresden.

At Versailles, the Marquise had now put the Prince de Soubise, a brother of the recently deceased Cardinal, who died of vice at thirty-eight, at the head of an army. This Prince, who, related to the Rohans and Chabots, derived his titles from Brittany and Navarre, had had a hard time of it recently while wildly endeavouring to be recognised as a member of the French peerage. In some ways he had been acknowledged, but Soubise still only remained a foreign Prince at the Court of Versailles.

Soubise was at first expected to march by Leipzig with thirty-two thousand men, and attack Frederick in Saxony. The Queen-Empress also greatly approved of another French army under the Maréchal d'Estrées being sent to Hanover, where great riches could, so she said, be looted, although both the Hessians and Hanoverians would first have to be crushed. Two Russian columns, according to the policy of the four women, were also to advance on Frederick, one to invade Prussia and the other Silesia. Bavaria was also largely subsidised by the Government of Pompadour to aid Austria with ten thousand men. Despite his initial Saxon successes, decidedly the merry Frederick, the man who would have been a Frenchman if he could, was to be crushed before long, as a direct result of the warm alliance of Maria Theresa with her dear friend and cousin the mistress of the King of France.

In order to make matters more sure, this last named country now renewed for twelve years an old, and very well paid, treaty of alliance with Sweden, and it was at the same time that Pompadour made of her friend Bernis a Minister of State.

While the devices of Maria Theresa and her female ally at Versailles now seemed likely to succeed, if only from the mere force of numbers, in one respect the Queen-Empress received a considerable check. For the various States of the Empire, the Germanic confederation of which, as Emperor, her husband was the head, refused to listen to her sophisms and arguments, declining to declare themselves against his Prussian Majesty.

In spite of this set-back it was decided that the whole of the Austrian army, recruited by sixty

thousand new men and all the troops that could be drawn from Hungary, was to co-operate with the French. Thus surely there would be enough troops in the field to hem Frederick in on every side, to smash him utterly and make him pay dearly for his sarcasms and insolence to three Royal ladies and a Royal concubine.

It was just at the time that her friendship with Maria Theresa had set her upon such a high pedestal that Jeanne Antoinette de Pompadour received a terrible set-back. A wretched fanatic named Damiens struck Louis XV. in the back with a penknife, not, it would appear, with the intention of killing the King, but merely that of calling attention to the abuses of the Government.

Louis XV. shewed himself a craven. While, like the greater number of the inhabitants of Paris, he imagined that the blow was the result of the intrigues of the Jesuits, who wished to see him replaced by the bigoted young Dauphin, he feared death and cried loudly for priestly absolution, asserting that he knew Damiens' penknife had been poisoned. Here was a chance for the Jesuits, one quickly taken advantage of by the Père Desmarets. This worthy father remembered how, when in August, 1744, " le Bien-Aimé " had been dangerously ill at Metz, the Church had subdued the evil-living monarch. Then Fitz-James, Bishop of Soissons, and the Jesuit Père Perusseau had refused absolution to the apparently dying King unless he consented to send away his two mistresses, the Duchesse de Châteauroux and her sister, the Duchesse de Lauraguais.

Père Desmarets was the King's confessor, and in that position extremely jealous of the influence

of the Marquise, whom he hated with a deadly hatred. When, therefore the wretched Damiens inflicted his scratch with his penknife upon the King, the Jesuit determined to enact over again with the frightened Louis XV. the celebrated scene of the bedchamber at Metz. Desmarets accordingly flatly refused to grant absolution to the licentious ruler of France unless he consented first to pack off Madame de Pompadour—to send her flying from Versailles.

Not for a second did Louis hesitate. In the presence of the Dauphin and a pack of weeping women headed by Madame Adélaïde, he agreed that his favourite should be sent away.

Now it was that the unfortunate Marquise learned just how much value could be placed on friendship, how much could be expected from gratitude! For M. de Machault took it upon himself to fly to her apartments and order Madame de Pompadour roughly on behalf of the King to " get out at once." She had already had several fainting fits, and was in tears when the brutal Keeper of the Seals appeared before her with this rough dismissal. Still in tears, the Marquise de Pompadour commenced to pack her boxes when some real friends came in, by which term we mean those to whose advantage it was that she should retain her position, not lose it.

The Prince de Soubise, for instance, expressed his deep regrets, while her worthy doctor, Quesnay, said: " Pish! the injury to the King was nothing." The Abbé de Bernis advised the Marquise to take plenty of time about her packing, for the King would soon find that he had nothing to fear, and then would surely change his views.

It was the Duchesse de Mirepoix, however, who

proved the best and most emphatic counsellor of all. Since her frustrated intrigue to replace the Marquise with the King by her charming niece, the Comtesse de Campis, the Duchesse de Mirepoix had found it to her advantage to form an alliance with the favourite. The Marquis d'Argenson describes in his memoirs the way in which, when this *grande dame* was driven about by Madame de Pompadour, she always took the back seat in the carriage.

She now proved a wise adviser in time of trouble. "Your Keeper of the Seals is an intriguing fool!" said the Duchesse, "one who wants the place of master for himself—he is merely playing you false. But I would ask you to remember this, that who quits the game loses it. Snap your fingers at them all, Jesuits and Keepers of the Seals included, and stop where you are."

Acting upon this sound advice, Madame de Pompadour, while giving out that she was getting ready for departure, took her time and was very leisurely over her preparations for removal from Versailles.

Thus for ten days she remained in her *appartement*, during which time she gave a large farewell dinner party daily. On the eleventh day the King, being perfectly restored to health, came in person to pay Madame de Pompadour a visit, when what took place between the worthy couple did not transpire. On the morrow, however, the definite order was given by the King to the effect that the selection of the Prince de Soubise by the Marquise to command the army was to be considered definite, and that he was to leave in a few days' time with twenty-four thousand men for the Bohemian Frontier.

So much for the intrigues of the Jesuits, and

especially of M. de Machault! They might now well feel a little anxiety as to the future, for the Marquise was established firmer in her place than ever, and, as she had formerly shewn in the case of the Comte de Maurepas, she was not a woman given to forgiving a deadly injury. It is no wonder, therefore, if we find, as almost the last entry in the honest Marquis d'Argenson's memoirs before he died, the following words: " The favour of the Keeper of the Seals is trembling; they say that he is sad and has changed."

Surely Machault deserved punishment, if only for his excess of zeal in another matter. When the unhappy Damiens, after striking his feeble blow at the King, was confined in the soldiers' guardroom at Versailles, the Keeper of the Seals went to look at the prisoner. Then he bribed the guards to pinch the unhappy wretch with red hot pincers on the thighs, with the view of forcing him to confess that he was acting as the tool of the Jesuits. Machault further called for faggots, and was about to burn Damiens alive on the spot, when the Provost of the Palace questioned his authority and asserted his own. The miserable being was, however, subsequently torn to pieces by four horses, after having suffered untold tortures in the presence of all the courtiers and *grandes dames* of Paris!

CHAPTER V

POMPADOUR AS A WAR MINISTER

Most unfortunately for history, the Marquis René de Voyer d'Argenson, the writer of such pithy memoirs and reflections, did not live to see his brother's disgrace and that of Machault d'Arnouville, the Keeper of the Seals, as he died on the 26th day of January, 1758.

A few days later, the Marquise de Pompadour was able to enjoy her vengeance upon these two important Ministers at once, the Comte d'Argenson, who, from merely interested motives, as his brother shews, was the sworn ally of the Jesuits, and Machault, their deadly enemy. Machault was already trembling as we have seen, but the Minister of War, who fondly imagined himself indispensable to the King now that a new campaign was commencing, was very much taken by surprise. He had always flattered Louis to the top of his bent, while consistently acting against the Marquise, whose overthrow he felt sure he had accomplished through the Jesuit Desmarets.

The King having recovered, however, Jeanne Antoinette was able to realise to the full that saying of Lord Byron: " Sweet is revenge, especially to

women." She pointed out to Louis the great danger in which he had been as a result of a recent Jesuit plot, and dwelt upon the fact that so long as he allowed a Jesuit-lover like the Minister of War about the Court his precious life would never be safe. She, however, his best friend, would protect him; she would with his permission send away this pestilent Comte, who might arm the next assassin with some horrible weapon far more deadly than a penknife.

"He must go, Sire, if you would live! Fortunately, the Duc de Choiseul has just returned from his mission to Vienna. I propose to send him to the Minister of War to tell him that we wish him to pollute the air of Versailles no longer."

"Yes, he certainly must go," replied Louis. "Do as you like, *ma mie*, and send Choiseul to tell him that he can remove himself at once."

That rising man, Choiseul, went with the greatest alacrity to inform the War Minister that he was no longer wanted. The Comte, however, who had been a Minister ever since the Regency of the Duc Philippe d,Orléans, and even for a year before the Regent died in 1723, simply refused to believe the Duc de Choiseul.

D'Argenson scoffed at the man from Lorraine. "You are mad, my young friend! If anyone is to go, it is yourself, and the sooner the better, and you can take the Marquise with you. But as for me, I remain, for the King loves me!"

When Madame de Pompadour reported this remark to Louis XV., he soon shewed the Comte how much he loved him, by sending him the following epistle:—

"Your services are no longer required. I command you to send me your resignation of the Secretaryship of State for War, and of all that appertains to the posts connected therewith, and to retire to your estate of Ormes."

So the crestfallen Comte not only had to take himself off, but was practically confined as a prisoner to his country place. If he wished any longer to see his dear Madame d'Estrades, he could not visit her in the house which, by his advice, she had at the time of her disgrace taken between Versailles and Paris, but would have to ask that volatile lady to come to him in a melancholy hole in the country.

Until she died, which was in the same year as the Comte d'Argenson, the Marquise was able to savour the delight of her triumph over her bitter foe, for Louis XV. never recalled those whom he had sent away. She had very little trouble in getting rid of Machault. For as an enemy of the Jesuits, the Princess Adélaïde and the Dauphin were with Madame de Pompadour in wishing to see the last of the Keeper of the Seals, although they bitterly regretted the loss of the Comte, the mainstay of their faction.

Machault d'Arnouville was sent, therefore, flying from office, but not in quite such an arbitrary manner as d'Argenson. Remembering for how long he had worked faithfully with her, the Marquise proved herself forgiving enough to allow the Keeper of the Seals to go with a substantial retiring pension.

She was now paramount; there was none to gainsay her, and she openly therefore joined herself with

the Magistrates of the Parliament in their hitherto long and uncertain war against the Jesuits. These latter were soon very down-hearted, their great seminary in Paris of Saint Louis le Grand being closed as a result of the action of the unfortunate Damiens.

With Choiseul, Kaunitz, and the Abbé de Bernis, all three good Jesuit-haters, the Marquise could now go gaily ahead in her European policy, in conjunction with two Empresses and a Queen. The result was that the earth soon trembled under the tramp of three-quarters of a million of men, all marching against that flute-playing Philosopher, Frederick of Prussia.

Frederick, however, went on laughing satirically, while improving his army with men of all nations, whom he welded together into a highly disciplined mass. He laughed, he composed, both in prose and verse, even on the battlefield, and he fought with bravery, and, what was better, discrimination. It may not, to quote the jealous Napoleon, have been real strategy which Frederick employed, it may have been "*magnifique mais pas la guerre*," but he contrived, against the fearful odds of Europe in arms, to hold his own.

The Marquise, being now practically War Minister, disposed of the commands of the French army as she liked. The Duc de Richelieu had offended her by trying to throw a young lady of his own selection into the arms of Louis XV. When, therefore, the conqueror of Minorca returned to Versailles, instead of being congratulated by the King upon his brilliant victory over the English, the greatest rake in France met with but the coolest

MADAME DE POMPADOUR
From the painting by Nattier, in the Musée de Saint-Omer

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reception. Louis merely greeted the Duc de Richelieu by asking him blandly if he had " found the figs good in Minorca," and then turned his back upon the conquering hero.

After this the Marquise left the vain-glorious Richelieu for a time to kick his heels about in the ante-chambers of Versailles while she gave a large command to the Maréchal d'Estrées. This talented soldier, a descendant of " *la belle Gabrielle* " of Henri IV., was despatched to Hanover to fight against the army of that State, which was commanded by the Duke of Cumberland, a son of George II.

D'Estrées, however, being, as we have said, a good soldier and a disciplinarian, made a great mistake. He forgot that any friend of the Marquise should have been allowed to swindle as much as he chose, and, accordingly, upon finding a contractor whom she had placed fraudulent in the matter of the supply of stores and ammunition, he hanged him out of hand, rather than allow his army to suffer. By thus doing, this excellent officer contrived to put a cord around his own neck by which before long the Marquise would pull him back to Versailles, where the Duc de Richelieu had, by practically throwing himself at the favourite's feet, succeeded in regaining her favour.

Being informed of what was hatching against him, d'Estrées hurried up, and made a splendid attack upon the Duke of Cumberland and the Hanoverians at Hastenbeck. This would have been an immense success but for the treachery to his commander of the Comte de Maillebois, through jealousy. This Maillebois, son of the Maréchal of that name, failed

to bring up his troops to support d'Estrées in the moment of victory; he was, by the way, the son-in-law of the straightforward Marquis d'Argenson. Had he but obeyed orders, the Hanoverian army would have been entirely destroyed. The only punishment with which this disgrace to the arms of France was visited was that a Council of Field-Marshals subsequently declared the Comte de Maillebois to be for ever unworthy of being accorded the rank of a Maréchal de France. After his victory, d'Estrées was, however, recalled by the Marquise, who sent the Duc de Richelieu to replace him, which nobleman, as the result of his predecessor's success, was soon able to occupy the whole of the Electorate of Hanover.

Madame de Pompadour and her three female Royal associates were soon swelling with pride, upon learning that by the Convention of Closter-Seven Richelieu had imposed future neutrality upon Hanover, thus robbing Frederick of his ally. They swelled yet more visibly when, in spite of various victories, Frederick, being employed elsewhere, was unable to prevent the Austrian cavalry from entering Berlin and putting the city to ransom. The feminine league were delighted, and, in fact, about to dance with glee at the utter annihilation of the Prussian, when the philosophic King treated them to a series of surprises, which caused these ladies to think seriously. One of the principal of these was at Rosbach, in Prussia. There the army of the Prince de Soubise was encamped, having been accompanied to its camp by no less than twelve thousand chariot loads of gay women, the paramours of officers and soldiers alike. There were ladies of

quality and actresses, there were singers and also dancers, there were milliners, dressmakers, *femmes de chambres* and cooks. There were, further, numerous *coiffeurs* and *coiffeuses* for both the officers and the ladies of this vast camp of debauchery, for the French officers considered it bad form to go into action without having their wigs properly dressed and curled in advance. Nightly there was rioting and unbridled licence in the French camp, which, indeed, more resembled an immense fair than an assemblage of stern warriors, determined to do their duty nobly and die for their country.

As an ally, Soubise was joined by a large Austrian army, under the Prince of Saxe-Hildburghausen, a much larger army than that of the French. Soubise was therefore warned from Versailles to look to it that Saxe-Hildburghausen should not be allowed to reap all the laurels, in which event it was to be feared that Pompadour's friend and cousin, Maria Theresa, might possibly repudiate her promise of the Austrian Low Countries to the Infanta and her husband Don Philip.

The Prince de Soubise determined therefore to attack Frederick II., whose comparatively small camp on the heights of Rosbach looked entirely undefended and quite unprepared for an assault. The plan, as arranged between the French and the Austrian commanders for the capture of this camp, seemed ridiculously easy. With their immensely superior numbers, the allies would just walk round the left flank of the long rows of tents of the Prussian King, cut off his retreat and massacre his troops to

a man before they could extricate themselves from those tents in order to form up in line of battle.

The allies started for their walk round the bottom of the slope of Rosbach. Leaving standing their camp with its many thousands of gay ladies, *grisettes* and hair dressers, the armies, in huge masses in close formation, moved off to the right, defiling in full view of and at a short distance from the Prussian camp. How easy it was going to be! What a report of his prowess Soubise was about to be able to send to Madame de Pompadour; how delighted the Royal Family would be when he announced his victory, his capture of the cynical scoffer Frederick, the annihilation of his forces!

Frederick meanwhile seemed to be sound asleep. Quietly, therefore, the combined armies continued their pleasant promenade around his flank—decidedly this Prussian was highly over-rated to allow himself thus to be caught napping!

But, what is this?—A single note of the Prussian bugles, a "G," sounded resonantly, echoes throughout the whole length of the Prussian camp from flank to flank. Upon the sound of that single "G," as one, fell every tent to the ground, displaying to the eyes of the battalions at the bottom of the slope numerous batteries in position, masses of cavalry—thousands of grim mounted men ready to attack!

One more second, and every gun upon the height of Rosbach roared simultaneously, its shot came hurtling through and through the dense masses of human flesh in the unsuspecting columns. At the same moment, with a terrific and blood-curdling yell, which struck terror to the heart, Frederick and his

cavalry came thundering down the slope, with fearful impact bursting upon the flank of the disconcerted French.

But why describe the battle of Rosbach farther? It was practically over from the moment of the sounding of that fateful G. In a moment, three thousand dead men lay stretched upon the field, and many thousands of wounded. As for the rest of the many thousands of gay promenaders of a minute before, they were running away in all directions. Running, running, running, it seemed as if they would never stop. And the Prussians were after and among them, cutting them down!

More distressing even was the anguished flight of the myriad women from the camp of the Prince de Soubise, away from which, with piteous screams and yells, streamed a never-ending and half-dressed throng of pretty immoralities. With hair all hanging about the shoulders, rich laces and ribbons trailing in the mud, these young and dissipated creatures tore away in wild and unreasoning panic. They left their jewels, their gold-stoppered scent bottles, their pretty shoes, rich dresses and furbelows. They left, moreover, all food, and stampeded like a herd of frightened cattle, fighting, tearing at each other for elbow room, sinking from time to time all bedraggled on the clammy, thawing snow, through which they ran wildly until exhausted.

Soon their ranks were invaded by the flying soldiers, who roughly flung aside from their path the lately pretty playthings, but now useless encumbrances, which blocked the way of escape from the terrible Prussian. They came to a river crossed by a single bridge, and, while driving rain com-

menced and night began to fall, the delicate women struggled and fought and screamed and begged for mercy from the routed soldiers and an army of male hairdressers. In vain, however, the despairing ones implored for free passage-way from the ruffians, who tore from their frail bodies such slight clothing as they had started with at the moment of their flight. For days the wretched creatures struggled on, many however sinking by the roadside from fatigue and starvation, to be trampled upon ruthlessly by the hobnails of the soldiers, the high heels of their fellow women, whom fear had transformed into furies.

How those who did not succumb ever eventually struggled back to France has not been recorded. There the crushing defeat of the army of Soubise, and the capture of all its principal officers, created too much consternation for people to trouble themselves about a few thousand daring matrons and giddy girls who had followed their lovers to the field, or gone to seek for new lovers at the seat of war. Had they but known it, the women had all much better have remained where they were, in the camp of Soubise. They would have been quite unmolested, unless of their own free will and out of feminine coquetry they had chosen to establish friendly relations with the victors, the disciplined army of Frederick the Great would have had nothing to do with them. By staying they would, moreover, have done their country a good turn, for in their vast numbers these volatile females would have greatly incommoded the Prussian monarch, who would have had to feed them in addition to the numberless prisoners that he had taken.

Since, however, they had preferred to simplify matters by so incontinently taking to their heels, the Prussian, Silesian, and Saxon soldiers of Frederick, over-running their abandoned tents, did not know what on earth to do with the mass of feminine articles which they found abandoned. Scent bottles, curling tongs, false hair, silks, satins and lingerie! In astonishment, the rough troopers picked up and examined many a costly and unknown article, only to cast it aside with a guttural grunt as being of no use to a soldier as loot.

Frederick and his staff meanwhile rode through the camp, where the great soldier could not restrain himself from laughter, as he saw not only the débris of the women, but the evidences of the feminine tendencies of the French officers, in the shape of the fancy needlework found in every tent which had been occupied by a noble from Versailles.

While in Paris and at Versailles all now jeered and scoffed at the Prince de Soubise, and cursed the Royal mistress who had given him such an important command, both Pompadour and the Royal Family were more deeply execrated for having ever abandoned the alliance of Frederick. The mass of the people were in favour of the old traditions of France, by which Austria was looked upon as a permanent enemy, and turned again the more willingly towards the Prussian monarch since he had defeated an Austrian army as well as one composed of Frenchmen.

Frederick cared at this time, however, nothing for the feelings or inclinations of anyone in France. He was in a hurry to take the conceit out of the Marquise's ally the Empress, whom he had heard to be

exulting because, while he was detained at Rosbach, she had elsewhere gained an important success. Prince Charles of Lorraine with an Austrian army had reconquered Silesia, at which event the triumph of Maria and the Austrians was too great to be allowed to last.

Accordingly, leaving Rosbach and all the abandoned feminine furbelows to rot on the ground, Frederick marched off at once to Silesia, and, in his seventh big battle of the year, drenched the ground at Leuthen with lakes of Austrian blood. Prince Charles was further hurled headlong out of Silesia, which became once more Prussian territory.

Decidedly, as the friend and ally of Maria Theresa, as likewise a Minister of War, the Marquise did not prove a success. Misfortune after misfortune resulted from her policy. The English landed and burned Cherbourg, the Comte de Clermont, of the family of Condé, was crushed at Creveldt by Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick. Frederick caused the Convention of Closter-Seven to be torn up, and the Hanoverians were in arms once more. To make things worse for Madame de Pompadour and the Court of Versailles, Louis XV. was reduced to imploring the bankers for loans which they withheld, while the annual expenditure of the Government of the favourite had increased to the terrific sum of five hundred million livres.

In her despair she turned to Bernis for a remedy, but this elegant versifier could merely make the feeble suggestion that she should recall her personal enemy, the Comte de Maurepas, or the able Chauvelin, the sworn foe of Austria. Bernis was already sick of being Minister of Foreign Affairs.

However capable he might have proved of polishing up the Marquise, of teaching her how to forget the vulgar bourgeois expressions with which she had been wont to horrify the refined ears of Versailles, he found that to succeed as a Minister of State under her rule was a well-nigh hopeless task. He begged Choiseul to come to his aid, longing for an opportunity to be rid of all responsibility, which he hoped to be able to shift on to the shoulders of the man from Lorraine. Nevertheless, he loved Pompadour, while she bore for the charming and polished Abbé de Bernis a very sincere affection, one which was greatly the result of gratitude, since she had indeed owed much to her refined preceptor and friend of many years standing.

It was not, however, possible for Bernis to shake off at once the cares of office. For owing to the instances of the Princess Louise Élizabeth, the Infanta, who had honoured the pretty man of the world by making of him her lover, he was too deeply committed. The Infanta would not allow him to give up the game. She, more even than her ally the Marquise, compelled him to drag on at the end of the Austrian chain, by which she hoped herself to be hoisted on to a throne.

The time came, however, when, despite the ambitions of the King's eldest daughter, the lover of this elegant Princess found himself at the end of his tether. Taking his pen, therefore, Bernis wrote the truth to the Queen-Empress. When Maria Theresa learned that there was no more money available from French sources, that France, moreover, seemed to be almost on the eve of a revolution, she acted wisely and withdrew her forces behind her own

frontiers. At the same time, at the Royal Council of Versailles, Bernis made an eloquent speech in favour of peace, one much approved of by both the King and the Dauphin.

CHAPTER VI

POMPADOUR, THE ABBÉ DE BERNIS AND CHOISEUL

The sister of the Prince de Soubise was the Duchesse de Marsan. In the deplorable state of morals at the Court of Louis XV., it was looked upon as little more than a joke when this elegant young lady and her brother, the handsome and giddy Cardinal de Soubise, the supposed son of the "Grand Monarque" Louis XIV., treated each other as lovers. The Court laughed, and Madame de Pompadour increased her title to the gratitude of the Soubise family, by raising the Duchesse de Marsan to a very important post. This was that of "Gouvernante des enfants de France," that is to say, she was given the nominal charge of the King's children, and received an enormous salary for doing nothing.

The Comte Étienne de Stainville, now Duc de Choiseul, had also come from Lorraine to the Court with a sister with whom he was on terms of unusual intimacy. The morals of the Court of King Stanislas at Lunéville were shocking, and from the time of his predecessor, Duke Francis of Lorraine, now Emperor, incest in high places had been looked upon as merely a venial indiscretion.

The sister of Stainville was a *chanoinesse* or Canoness, but would not appear to have taken any religious vows, the status of *chanoinesse* being one often accorded to ladies of good family in Lorraine, as in France, merely that they might draw an income from the Church. She was twenty years of age, tall, handsome and high-coloured when she came to France with her brother in search of fortune.

When Stainville blossomed out, by the grace of Madame de Pompadour, into a *Duc et Pair de France*, it became the fashion at Versailles for the nobles to follow his example, and made a show of being in love with their sisters. When Louis XV. told Choiseul in jest that he would be surely damned for his behaviour, the Duc ventured to reply humorously, with a home thrust at the King. This touched his conduct with Madame Henriette and Madame Adélaïde very nearly, but Louis merely laughingly replied that he was "the anointed of the Lord," and, therefore, could do as he liked.

Having almost reached the top of the ladder himself, the Duc de Choiseul contrived to find a rich husband for his sister, in the person of the Duc de Gramont. She continued, nevertheless, to remain on the same intimate terms with her brother, to whom her advice in political matters was sound. Above all, she constantly reminded him that to make their fortunes they must continue to stick closely to the skirts of the Marquise.

A third lady of the Court was the Duchesse, or, as she was usually termed, the Maréchale de Mirepoix, of whom we have already made mention. Her manners were very ingratiating, with the result that

Madame de Pompadour nicknamed Madame la Maréchale " the little pussy-cat."

When she began to find the Abbé de Bernis slipping from her in the matter of the maintenance of the Austrian alliance, the Marquise de Pompadour felt herself in want of new friends to back her up. The two Empresses and the Electress-Queen at a distance were merely becoming a cause of reproach to her after the defeat of Rosbach, but she had no intention of abandoning Austria. She therefore formed a little intimate council of three influential women at Versailles, that council being composed of Mesdames de Marsan, de Gramont, and de Mirepoix. These women toadied the Marquise and flattered her to the top of her bent. They were ever at her heels, and she listened only too readily to the advice of this trinity of women, who were all for Austria.

Controlled as the Marquise was by her pocket council, at the time that the Abbé de Bernis made his very sensible speech in favour of peace, the Marquise went astray. With the King and the Dauphin both inclined to listen to the Abbé, and put an end to the war which was ruining France, had it not been for Madame de Pompadour overtures would have been made to Prussia and England.

The three female adherents of the Marquise constituted, however, an Austrian cabal, in which capacity they urged her on no account to listen to Bernis and abandon the Empress-Queen Maria Theresa.

In order to retain the admiration of these three women therefore, the Marquise said that there was to be no peace, when, of course, the indolent Louis

listened to the dictum of his favourite and factotum. Bernis, however, if suave, was sensible, and moreover had the real good of his country at heart. While by no means overbearing or aggressive, since he had become Minister of Foreign Affairs he had shown an inclination to be quietly persistent in following any course which he knew to be right. He thus in a measure resembled the late Marquis d'Argenson, who had lost his post as Foreign Minister merely because he had urged the cessation of an unnecessary war. If war was to be continued, it therefore dawned upon the ambitious Marquise that some means must be found of shelving her old friend and ally the Abbé.

He hated unpopularity, and came to her in despair to urge her to come over to his views. "Do you not see," he asked, "that we are both making ourselves hated, nay worse, detested, and that our unpopularity will only increase if we do not make peace? Listen to me, I beg, or things may go badly with you. We have done all that we can for Madame l'Infante, and we are not really advancing her interests by going on with this struggle. For as Austria, like ourselves, becomes weaker, the Empress will be all the more disinclined to divest herself of the Low Countries in favour of the Infanta. Let us then stop it all before France has become absolutely bankrupt, and our best soldiers are all dead or prisoners. If merely as an act of humanity, can you not see that it is high time that this bloody war which is devastating Europe was brought to an end?"

The Abbé became quite excited, but the Marquise, who remained unconvinced and calm, merely

replied, in idiotic fashion, " I am the Minister of Limbo, uncertain, vague, floating. I belong to the world of dreams."

Bernis left the dreaming Minister of Limbo in despair, for he did not well see how such a Minister could help him in the Government. Moreover, he well knew the attitude of the people, and feared greatly that with all the blame of the repeated disasters to the French arms being thrown upon the Foreign Minister, that Minister might well lose his head, or terminate his earthly career by dangling at the end of a string.

Pompadour, who knew what she was about, and whose sole object was to be rid of the Abbé in order to leave herself absolutely supreme and untrammelled in the Government, laughed the matter over with her three female friends after he had left her. " Bernis will go now, as we shall soon see, for he, poor man, thinks that I have gone completely mad, and will wish therefore to have no more to do with me. But in what manner will he retire from the Government—I wonder what his next move will be? "

The Marquise had not long to wonder. The Abbé, who was, above all, *un homme d'esprit*, knew well recent history, and remembered therefore how various other clerical Ministers, both in France and Spain, had covered their delinquencies. Had not Alberoni wisely said, " They do not hang Cardinals"? Had not that astute Minister covered his hurried retreat from Spain with a Cardinal's hat, and thus saved his head which was in jeopardy?

Facetiously, in turn, the Abbé de Bernis now observed that a crimson Cardinal's hat would form

"an excellent umbrella." He wrote urgently to Rome on the subject, and also went to Louis XV., and reminded him of the fact that if ever he should seek such an adornment he had promised to procure it for him.

While waiting for his hat, Bernis was successful in inducing the Duc de Choiseul to come to his aid. Meanwhile, Madame Adélaïde and the Dauphin, jealous of their sister, the Infanta's, ambitious schemes, which aimed even at the thrones of Spain and Poland, and knowing how Bernis was involved in them, joined in a plot to injure Louise Élizabeth. A story was concocted and told to the King. It was to the effect that the Infanta had been heard calling the Abbé de Bernis into her room after she had retired for the night. To make the scandal more *scabreux*, it was asserted that, her room having been darkened, Madame l'Infante was not aware of the fact that it was one of the Dauphin's gentlemen whom she had called in by mistake.

Louis XV. was always jealous of his daughters' affections, and for some time past had been particularly jealous of the preference of the Infanta for Bernis. This spiteful tale had, therefore, the desired effect. The King told the Abbé that he had no further use for him as a Minister of State, and that he preferred his residing at Soissons to Versailles. The Cardinal's hat arriving at the same time, Louis is said to have flung it at Bernis as one would throw a bone to a dog. To be the more disagreeable, the King at the same time wrote a satirical letter to his eldest daughter. In this he told Louise Élizabeth that he had no doubt but that she would be highly

pleased at the satisfaction that he was giving her by exiling Bernis from the Court.

She suffered much from the affront and at the loss of her bosom friend and ally, who was replaced in the Government by the Duc de Choiseul. While the Marquise de Pompadour smoothed matters for the Cardinal de Bernis, by sending him as the Ambassador of France to the Court of Rome, acting through the Duc de Choiseul, she soon concluded a new treaty of alliance with Maria Theresa. In this there was no mention made of the inheritance of the Infanta to the throne of the Low Countries.

Seeing herself thus laid on the shelf, chiefly as the result of the intrigues of her own family, the unfortunate Princess died, it is said, of mortification, within a year of the signing of this new Austrian compact.

It was, however, a terrible treaty which the Marquise had now concluded—one which may be said to have killed France—it was, indeed, one to drain her life-blood! Immense subsidies were to be paid to Sweden and Saxony to help Austria. Maria Theresa was to receive an allowance of eight million livres yearly, and, further, should France make any conquests they were to be given over to the Empress-Queen, as likewise Minorca, already taken from the English.

There was one saving clause, which came as a sop to the poor Infanta before she died. This was that her young daughter Isabelle was affianced to the Archduke Joseph, a boy who eventually became Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, or, as he is usually called, Emperor of Germany.

A ridiculous scheme was now set on foot by the

Ministry of the Marquise and Choiseul. This was to invade England, Scotland, and Ireland simultaneously by sending fleets to rival in size those of the Spanish Armada. Upon these large armies were to embark, the army for Scotland to be commanded by the Duc d'Aiguillon, a scapegrace nephew of the Duc de Richelieu, who had been the successful lover of the Marquise de la Tournelle, before she became the Duchesse de Châteauroux and the King's mistress. The expedition which was to subdue England was, under the Prince de Soubise, to sail up the Thames to London on fifty thousand flat-bottomed boats, while the Irish invasion was to be accomplished by a pirate named Thurot. Was ever such a scheme heard of? To be carried out, moreover, by a Government without money!

Two of the fleets, however, were got ready and sailed. That for Scotland was defeated off the French coast, and almost every ship captured by the English before the prudent d'Aiguillon would consent to embark, while the bold Thurot made a landing in Ireland, took the town of Carrickfergus, and was himself killed a few months after Wolfe had, in Canada, captured Quebec from the Marquis de Montcalm.

The invasion of London was given up owing to the double disaster of the defeat of the French at Minden by the English and Hanoverians, and the destruction of the French fleet off Gibraltar a few days later. Both of these events took place in August, 1759, and in that same year the English in India took all of the French possessions with the exception of Pondicherry.

Such was the result of all these disasters that,

while the Parliaments of both Paris and the Provinces became revolutionary, on account of the new taxes imposed by the Government of Pompadour and Choiseul, the King was unable for many months to pay his Household at Versailles.

In the face of all these misfortunes, the credit of the faded Madame de Pompadour declined even with the King whose authority she had usurped. In order to keep Louis amused, however, and careless of her proceedings and those of Choiseul, she determined to give him a new mistress, one who while not a lady of quality would yet be of more importance than the young girls with whom his seraglio in the Parc aux Cerfs had been kept supplied by relays during the past three years.

The Marquise, accordingly, instructed the Lieutenant Général de Police to find her the most beautiful girl in the Kingdom who should belong to the middle classes. Such a young lady was found at Grenoble. She was the daughter of a lawyer, and her name was Mademoiselle de Romans. This girl of nineteen was absolutely beautiful and flawless, and of a most amiable disposition. She was a creature resembling the goddess Minerva, being six feet in height, with moreover wonderful hair which descended to her feet, and with which she was able to drape herself as a veil. In the year 1760 Mademoiselle de Romans was, by the arrangement of the Marquise, taken to the King at Versailles in state, in a Royal chariot with six horses—a nice spectacle for the starving people!

Mademoiselle de Romans became the mother of a son in the following year, by which time the Marquise had become jealous. Fearing that the King

would legitimatise his son by this lovely girl, Madame de Pompadour barbarously now caused the boy to be stolen from her by the police and brought up by a clerk. The Marquise had argued the inhuman King into giving his consent to this cruel abduction, but Louis made an allowance of a thousand crowns yearly for the boy's support.

Sixteen years later Mademoiselle de Romans induced the humane Louis XVI. to have search made for her son, when that King caused the police to reveal his hiding place. He was then given a benefice and known as the Abbé de Bourbon, and was a very handsome youth, very greatly resembling his father, Louis XV. The boy's mother had in the meantime married an officer of the name of de Cavanhac, as although Louis still continued to visit her after the death of Madame de Pompadour in 1764, Mademoiselle de Romans had by that time ceased to attract the jaded King to any great extent. She, however, always retained her wonderful beauty, and, with the exception of her connection with the debauched Monarch to whom she had been sold by her relations, was never known to be guilty of any indiscretions.

The war wore on its weary way, and although, by the "Family Compact" with the Bourbons of Spain, Naples and Parma, Choiseul dragged in more allies for France and Austria, Great Britain and Prussia continued to hold their own. When George III. had been on the throne, however, for little more than a year he ceased to support Frederick the Great with subsidies, and even advised him to make peace upon disgraceful terms with his enemies.

Rather than yield up Silesia to Maria Theresa,

Frederick, however, stuck to his guns, and just at that moment the Empress Elizabeth of Russia, one of the allies of Madame de Pompadour, died. With her successor, the Emperor Peter III., the Prussian King was then at once able to make a separate peace upon most honourable terms, which left him all the stronger to go on with the conflict against his other foes.

The Parliament of Paris was by this time crying out furiously against the continuation of the war for the aggrandisement of Austria, crying out too loudly against the Duc de Choiseul, who with the connivance of his close ally, Madame de Pompadour, had now annexed various ministerial posts for himself and his near relatives.

The worthy couple then contrived to draw a red-herring across the scent to divert the men of the robe —the Magistrates of the Parliament—from their track. When they suggested to the *conseillers* of the Parliament that they should combine forces and together eat up the Jesuits, far from being any longer against the Marquise and Choiseul, the men of the robe were with these former enemies heart and hand. For the Jansenistical Magistrates had suffered much, including banishment and imprisonment at various times during the reign of Louis XV., their sufferings having been entirely the result of Jesuit intrigues with the King and the Royal Family. To have a chance of at last getting even with their determined and bitter foes was almost too much to dream of, but with the King's Government, in the shape of Pompadour and Choiseul, upon their side, revenge of the sweetest kind seemed certain.

The Jesuits played into the hands of the Parlia-

ment, when a certain commercial concern which one of their number had started in Martinique failed for three millions, and the rest of the French members of the Society of Jesus refused to make good his defalcations. The intemperate Madame Adélaïde foolishly rushed in, and caused the King to send a lawyer to the galleys, on an infamous charge of *being suspected* of having forged an order of the Grand Council against the Society of Jesus. He committed suicide at once, and by his action drove another nail into the Jesuit coffin.

The Parliament, with Choiseul and Madame de Pompadour lying low in the background, at once commenced to bait the Jesuits, by whom for so long they had been baited, insisting that they should justify their existence as a Society, that they should make publicly known their hitherto hidden Statutes of Ignatius Loyola.

The King, urged by the Royal Family, committed a very foolish action when, with a military force behind him, he came to the Parliament to compel the men of the robe to obey him in a Bed of Justice. They refused to be silenced, refused to register the taxes, and boldly demanded of Louis an account of all the State funds he had spent upon his women and his gambling debts. Their demands barely veiled the threat that they would make known some of the infamous actions of the King's later life —his carryings off of girls, notably that of the seraphic Mademoiselle de Tiercelin, whom the Police stole for him at the age of nine, and who became a mother at fourteen!

The men of the Parliament knew only too well that this stolen child had been sent away with an

income which had been increased to a hundred thousand livres, and that she was now constantly asking for more. By thus threatening to reveal what they knew, the *conseillers* brought not the King alone but all of that sink of iniquity, Versailles, to its knees. The people had already cried, " Let us burn Versailles!" ten years previously; it now seemed more than likely that the threat would be put into execution. Under these circumstance, it was useless for all the prelates in France to beg the King to back up the Jesuits; he dared not move for fear of being burnt alive in his bed.

The secret advice of the two Jesuit-haters, Pompadour and Choiseul, to Louis was now to keep the Parliamentary mouth shut, not by force, but by abandoning the Jesuits to the Magistrates. Thus, also, they represented—and thus only—would the taxes be registered and money obtained. There could be but one result! the Parliament was allowed to do as it liked with the Jesuits, burn the books of the Society, forbid its members to hear confessions or to educate French children any longer.

In yet other ways the Jesuits were trampled under foot, and in the year 1762 they were in many parts of France ordered to abandon their colleges and homes, while their goods were seized and sold. The Royal Family made yet one more stand in favour of the Order of Jesus, whereupon Choiseul frankly told the King that he must either suppress the Jesuits or face a revolution.

The Marquise de Pompadour and her firm friend the Duc de Choiseul, to whom she had given a very rich and young heiress as wife, thus continued to rule the roost in spite of the vastly increased power

of the Parliament, a body which could burn, hang, and break on the wheel almost at will. By carefully continuing their alliance with the men of the robe, they held their sway. In the year 1764 the Society of Jesus was altogether suppressed in France, but Jeanne Antoinette de Pompadour died before the edict of suppression was promulgated.

CHAPTER VII

THE DUCHESSE DE CHOISEUL, DUCHESSE DE GRAMONT AND JULIE

The sway of the Marquise de Pompadour was terminated by her death at the age of forty-two, nor, although she had for years suffered from delicate lungs, was her decease generally attributed to natural causes. According to the gossipy revelations of her waiting lady, Madame du Hausset, the Marquise was " very fond " of the Duc de Choiseul, who had certainly attained to such great success by paying a lover-like court to the King's neglected favourite.

Choiseul was, however, merely a pleasant rascal, dominated completely by his yet more rascally sister, the Duchesse de Gramont. This young lady had only toadied the Marquise for what she could get from her, above everything seeking free access to the King, into whose way she threw herself in the most indecent manner. It would not have been natural for Louis not to have accorded to the handsome sister of Choiseul a corner of his handkerchief; she, however, wanted far more than an occasional supper in the King's apartments, indeed, nothing less than the great position of Pompadour, and Louis XV. for herself alone.

Except upon one occasion, when he became intoxicated, the King, however, fought rather shy of the intriguing Duchesse by whom he was besieged, for he was afraid of the Choiseul domination, fearing especially its costliness, since the Duc was already drawing a million livres annually from France. For his conduct with Madame de Gramont upon that occasion the Marquise on the following morning had violently reproached the King. She had, moreover, then almost induced him to send away the Duc de Choiseul and the intriguing Duchesse, who was already triumphantly giving out that she was to be the new favourite. Madame de Pompadour urged that, rather than submit to the proposed domination over him of both the Choiseuls, the King would do more wisely to recall the Abbé de Bernis to office, a course which Louis was very near taking.

Madame de Gramont was not, however, altogether discouraged when she found Louis no longer accessible and the Marquise shewing her the cold shoulder. " She cannot last long," she remarked to her brother, " her health is decidedly shaky. Let us only have a little patience and I shall have all that she has now, and perhaps a little more into the bargain. The King was really most loving to me. It is, therefore, merely a matter of the Marquise being out of the way."

The " all " that the Marquise possessed was fabulous. Her income alone was a million and a half. She owned, in addition, the magnificent Châteaux of Brimborion, Bellevue and Aulnay, and the huge estates of Crécy, St. Remy and Marigny. Further than this, Madame de Pompadour had magnificent establishments at the Royal palaces of

Paris, Versailles, Compiègne and Fontainebleau. Her collection of art treasures was, moreover, immense. Thus it may be seen that the Duchesse de Gramont was coveting more than a little when she sought to replace Jeanne Antoinette in the King's favour.

The vicious woman after her rebuff was more than ever determined to succeed in supplanting her friend, many of whose most important secrets she shared. That friend, however, redoubled her efforts as watch-dog, with the result that the Duchesse was kept carefully away from the King. The Marquise, nevertheless, had begun greatly to fear, not only the unscrupulous Madame de Gramont, but her quondam admirer, the Duc de Choiseul. When, accordingly, she fell ill with acute pains in the spring of 1764, she sent for the Duc de Richelieu. To him she confided her absolute certainty that she was dying as the result of being poisoned by the Duc de Choiseul and his unprincipled sister.

Madame de Pompadour died of her pains, no matter how they may have been caused, upon the 15th of April. She had in dying, however, her revenge, since Richelieu imparted the poison story to all at the Court. It was an useless act of spite for the Duchesse de Gramont, in return, to spurn with her foot the coffin of the Marquise in the Church of the Capucines, for the harm was done. To the end of their days neither the brother nor sister were entirely cleared of the suspicion of being the poisoners of Madame de Pompadour.

After this unfortunate woman was quietly reposing in her grave, her mantle fell, however, upon the shoulders of the Duc de Choiseul, who for some

years kept the King entirely under his thumb. He is said, indeed, although his manners were mild, to have succeeded in terrorising the Monarch, whose secrets he had surprised when he and Pompadour had once ransacked the King's desk together, to learn of the private diplomatic agents whom Louis habitually employed without the knowledge of his Ministers. If he was, indeed, terrorised, Louis sought to have a mild revenge. While neglecting the Duchesse de Gramont, he lost no opportunity of making love to Choiseul's young wife.

She was a delicious little creature of virtuous inclinations, and had been Mademoiselle de Crozat-Duchâtel, an immense heiress, when at the early age of twelve, Madame de Pompadour gave her to Choiseul, as a reward for inducing his cousin de Choiseul-Beaupré to lock up his too enterprising young wife.

Although from the time that, as a child, she was married to the Duc he had habitually flouted and disregarded her, as had likewise his sister, she could not be driven into the evil courses of the majority of the women of the Court. Charming and *mignonne* to a degree, the little Duchesse had always hosts of admirers at her feet, but her instincts were good, and she could not be led astray, not even by a Louis XV.

It was, indeed, but a very mild revenge which the King sought to take upon his Minister, since the latter, far from resenting the fact of the debauched Monarch's attempt to seduce his wife, would have considered the success of Louis as a triumph to himself, one which would help to keep him secure in the great position to which he had attained.

When the King refused to make anything but the most temporary plaything of his sister, the Duc therefore, instead of resenting the King's strong inclination towards the young Duchesse, did all in his power to foster it. Notwithstanding, however, that Choiseul pointed out to that delicious young person his spouse the advantages that both she and he stood to gain by her listening to the King's ardent advances, she proved obstinately virtuous. She thus became all the more desired by Louis XV., who was, however, allowed to sigh in vain, for the lady remained obdurate.

By the goodness and unselfishness of her disposition, by her innate virtue, which nothing could shake, the Duchesse de Choiseul stood out alone in her day at the Court. She was thus, indeed, one of the remarkable women of France.

When, eventually, Louis XV. sent Choiseul away from the Court to his grand country place in Alsace, vicious as the King was, he shewed that he had learned to appreciate and respect this virtue which he could not overcome. For he wrote to the Duc that were it not for the particular regard that he had for his wife, he would have ordered him to a greater distance from Versailles than his estate of Chanteloup.

It was after the dismissed Minister had spent in riotous debauchery at Chanteloup the huge fortune of his wife, which she willingly abandoned to him for his pleasures, that he began to urge her once more to listen to the King.

For Louis had never forgotten the delicately-attractive Duchesse, to whose ears he had caused hints to be carried to the effect that he would remake

for her the fortune that she had lost. Despite the messages of Louis XV., and the instances of the Duc de Choiseul, to whom poverty in seclusion was particularly irksome, to her honour be it recorded, the Duchesse remained immaculate. She said that she had already given to her husband willingly all that she possessed where worldly goods were concerned. But even for his sake, so long as life lasted, of one precious possession she refused to divest herself, and that was her honour.

How unworthy the Duc de Choiseul was of such fidelity on the part of this admirable woman can be seen from merely one instance in his disreputable career. While still at the zenith of his power, he fell passionately in love with the very attractive wife of his brother, the Comte de Stainville. Very much a woman of the world, the career of the Comtesse may not perhaps have been perfectly blameless, but upon one point she had made up her mind. This was that she would not descend to an intrigue with her brother-in-law, whom she laughed at, saying that, for all his fine airs and graces, he was nothing but "*un petit maître, un coureur de filles.*"

The Duc de Choiseul continuing to persecute her with his attentions, the Comtesse only laughed at him the more scornfully. Terrible and mean was then the revenge taken by this "great man," one who, aided by the constant counsels of his evil-minded sister de Gramont, ruled the King and France.

To prove his omnipotence, Choiseul took his vengeance upon his sister-in-law during a Court ball at Versailles, in the very presence of various members of the Royal Family. While the festivities were at

their height, some police officials suddenly entered the ballroom. They laid violent hands upon the Comtesse de Stainville, charged her with being a low creature of no morals, and dragged the screaming woman away in her ball dress to a house of correction for abandoned women.

Before the death of the Marquise de Pompadour the terrible Seven Years' War had ended, by the loss to France of all her North American Colonies to England. Frederick the Great had made peace with Austria upon practically his own terms. When, after eight years absence from his capital, he returned to Berlin, it was to re-enter that city as a conqueror, the undisputed owner of that Silesia for which Maria Theresa had sacrificed so many thousands of lives in vain.

It was of a France crippled, not only by the terrible expenses of the war but by the obligation of continuing the payment of an immense annual subsidy to Austria, that the Duc de Choiseul had remained the practical ruler after the decease of the King's mistress had left him to his own resources in the Government.

Of ruling alone, a *petit maître* of his calibre was quite incapable. Therefore it soon came to be known at Versailles that the ruler and principal adviser of the Duc was his virile, strong-minded and impertinent sister, without whose counsels he did nothing, gave nothing. To gain the Minister's ear in any matter it became therefore necessary first to win the Duchesse de Gramont, to flatter and bribe her in some way. The disreputable Duchesse de Gramont had, however, her own ruler. She was a waiting woman, who had to be bribed far more

directly and largely than her mistress. The Duchesse de Gramont, indeed, seemed to expect that those who sought any favour from herself should come to her with the approbation of her beloved Mademoiselle Julie, and looked with a favourable eye only upon such as had poured treasure into the lap of the young woman who held such an equivocal position in her household.

What was the exact position of this confidential young maid or waiting lady of the Duchesse de Gramont was a question which the courtiers at Versailles frequently debated among themselves. Of one thing they were, however, certain, which was that it was far wiser for them to cosset and make much of Mademoiselle Julie's pet dog than to abuse its appearance or tread upon its tail. Princes were not ashamed to fondle the cur, or Dukes to be seen dandling " Fido " in their arms.

For in Mademoiselle Julie was recognised a power which, while standing but two steps from the throne, was able to control it through her unprincipled mistress, Madame de Gramont. It would seem to have been an understood thing that the enigmatical young creature whom this latter kept so closely about her person was to share her spoils with Choiseul's sister. For instance, there would appear to be no doubt of the fact that the diamond necklace with which Comte Lally, the unfortunate ex-Governor of French India, bribed Julie was transferred at once to the ample neck of the Duchesse de Gramont.

The connection between Napoleon Bonaparte and the shady favourite of Madame de Gramont may seem far to seek, yet as a matter of fact the great

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Corsican adventurer owed much to Mademoiselle Julie, nothing less, indeed, than the fact that he was born under the French flag, and thus enabled to become a French officer.

The circumstances were as follows: The island of Corsica, in which the Italian family of Bonaparte resided, belonged to the Republic of Genoa. When the Corsicans revolted from the Genoese and proved too strong for reduction, a Genoese noble and statesman came to Paris to see if he could hear of anything to the advantage of his country, which had so often in the past been intimately connected with France.

Calling one day upon the usually bright and debonnaire Julie, he found the young lady quite unlike herself. She could not be induced to smile, but remained listless and despondent before her Italian visitor's sallies. When pressed to confide the cause of her sorrows, the artless maiden produced an enormous roll of Canadian banknotes. "Do you wonder that I am sad?" she asked the man from Genoa, "when since the peace which has transferred Canada to England these have become absolutely worthless! And I have so little!" she added with a sigh, while applying the corner of an embroidered handkerchief to her lustrous eyes.

The Genoese noble saw his chance. "Weep not, fair Demoiselle!" he exclaimed, "let me have a look at the notes; something might perhaps be done with them to make them more valuable."

"Oh, what can be done?" exclaimed Julie, as with alacrity she thrust the wad of worthless paper into the Italian's hands. "Only tell me that, and I will—I will do more than love you; I will help you in anything you may desire."

"I am a bit of a conjuror," returned the Italian, "and under certain circumstances, which I will explain, these now useless Canadian notes could be turned into good Genoese ones. Just listen to me for a minute."

The result of this conversation was that Julie had subsequently much to say to the Duchesse de Gramont, and she in turn had important affairs to discuss with her brother.

The end of the matter was that, though the Duc de Choiseul did not at once accord to Genoa the help that was sought to put down the Corsican rebels, an arrangement was come to. By this, while the Island of Corsica was ceded to France, that country undertook herself to invade it and reduce the celebrated patriot Pascal Paoli, who had hitherto successfully braved the arms of Genoa.

The principal friend and the right hand of Pascal Paoli, who was, by the way, aided by English money, was Charles Bonaparte, the father of Napoleon. When, as a sequence to the by-play of Mademoiselle Julie with her notes, a French army, under the Comte de Vaux, defeated the hero Paoli and took possession of Corsica, the patriot retired to England, in which country some of his sons were born, to become naturalised Englishmen and serve in the English army. Paoli begged Charles Bonaparte to come with him to England. Had he done so, his son Napoleon might perhaps likewise have been born under the British flag, and employed his wonderful military genius upon behalf of those who became his deadly enemies.

Charles Bonaparte preferred, however, to remain in Corsica and to acknowledge France. Thus, as

the direct result of the wiles of the artless Julie and the subsequent action of the Duchesse de Gramont, was Napoleon Bonaparte born in that island as a Frenchman upon August 15th, 1769.

The conquest of Corsica, an act of policy which was dictated to the Duc de Choiseul by two worthless women, was the cause of great heart-burning in England. It was not accomplished without much bloody fighting, especially at the famous Bridge of Golo, and was the last conquest made by any of the Bourbon Kings.

In spite of the fact that Burke cried loudly to the English Government to intervene—to assist Pascal Paoli openly with soldiers instead of merely secretly with money—other counsels prevailed. Lord Mansfield was listened to when he asserted that the nation was too wise to make war on account of Corsica. Paoli was, however, brought to England in honour on board a British man-of-war, and when he died, the hero of Corsican Independence was accorded a tomb in Westminster Abbey.

CHAPTER VIII

THE DAUPHINE MARIA JOSEPHA

In the year 1765 died Louis the Dauphin, the strong upholder of the Jesuits in France. As the Duc de Choiseul, with Madame de Pompadour, had been the bitter opponents of these followers of Ignatius Loyola, the blow delivered against the Choiseuls on her deathbed by the Marquise now took effect. People began to say openly that, as Choiseul was a poisoner, he had probably poisoned the fat and bigoted Dauphin. His widow, however, who equally supported those of the Society of Jesus, remained alive, and Maria Josepha, daughter of Frederick Augustus II. of Saxony and Poland, was a well-intentioned and capable young woman. She endeavoured at once to wind herself around her father-in-law Louis XV., and not only to wean him from his disreputable courses, but to oppose the influence of Choiseul. Although the latter was greatly shaken in public opinion as the result of the wretched termination of the Seven Years' War, the amiable Dauphine was not strong enough to shake the hold which he had upon the King. She was, however, largely successful in withdrawing Louis

from the constant society of the numerous unfortunate but handsome young creatures whom he bought for his ignoble pleasures. Determined, moreover, that her father-in-law should instal no lady of quality at Versailles as a new *maîtresse en titre*, she took a bold step. We have already mentioned how the set of apartments of the Sieur Lebel, the King's valet, went by the name of *le Trébuchet*, the Birdtrap, "as they caught young birds there." Despite the evil reputation of this suite, in which the King's new mistresses were usually lodged for a day or two upon first arrival at Versailles, the Dauphine declared after her husband's death that she would occupy it and no other. She wished, she said, to be close to the King, with whom she could share her sorrows. Having successfully installed herself in the Birdtrap, the sensible Maria Josepha was in a position to prevent any questionable ladies from gaining too ready access to her father-in-law, whom she was herself able to see at all hours. Although Louis XV. had always detested and mistrusted the Dauphin, his feelings were very different towards the Dauphine, who was a tall woman with a fine figure, a good complexion, fair hair and handsome features.

In this close proximity to the King this Princess soon contrived to obtain considerable influence. This she made use of to make her future position secure, being especially anxious that Louis should officially appoint her to the Regency of the Kingdom in the event of his death before the majority of her young son, the future Louis XVI., a boy eleven years old. Her influence became daily greater, to

the extent that, while the Court expected to see the downfall of the Duc de Choiseul and his intriguing sister, Maria Josepha seemed herself to be about to hold the reins of State after the fashion of the late Madame de Pompadour.

Being sure of her ground, the enterprising Dauphine, acting against the advice and wish of Choiseul, now encouraged the King to back up that worthless noble the Duc d'Aiguillon, who, as Governor of Brittany, had been guilty of nothing less than forgery in a matter concerning de la Chalotais, the Procureur Général of the Parliament of Rennes. It was a cruel and shady business in which, not content with unjustly replacing la Chalotais by his tool and assistant forger de Calonne, d'Aiguillon would, had he been able, have broken the former Procureur Général on the wheel. It was in vain that the Duc de Choiseul instigated the Parliament of Paris to take proceedings against both Aiguillon and Calonne, for the King ordered all of the papers concerning the matter to be sent to himself, destroyed them and quashed the proceedings.

Louis XV. considered, no doubt, that he owed a debt of gratitude to the Duc d'Aiguillon, this scapegrace nephew of the Duc de Richelieu having, as will be remembered, when himself Duc d'Agenois, surrendered his *cherè amie*, the Marquise de la Tournelle, to the King. To the Dauphine all that mattered was that d'Aiguillon was the enemy of Choiseul, strong moreover from the backing of that old rake his uncle, the Duc de Richelieu. Accordingly, thinking herself about to be able to assume the position of a First Minister, she prepared

a Ministry in which, while the Duc de Choiseul was to be excluded, the principle place was to fall to the Duc d'Aiguillon.

Alas! however, for the Saxon Princess! When, after thirteen months of intrigue, unlimited power seemed to be within her grasp, she, while apparently strong and healthy, suddenly had a great loss of blood after taking a cup of chocolate—and died soon afterwards. If people had cried out "Poisoner!" against the Duc de Choiseul before, how much more did they do so now. There was, however, nothing to connect the Minister in any way with the death of the Dauphine; therefore, when the King's doctor Sénac contradicted another physician, named Tronchon, who had said "poison," Louis XV. accepted Sénac's dictum, which merely attributed the sudden end of Maria Josepha to "accident." Had she lived, it is evident that the Dauphin's widow would soon have swept the board clear of all of the Stainville clan, including Choiseul's cousin, the Duc de Praslin. Being a woman of undoubted ability, she would also in the years to come have not only played a great figure in the State, but have continued to steady Louis XV., perhaps have reformed him altogether in his declining years. Thus, perchance, he might not have left to his unfortunate grandson the awful heritage of the Revolution and the guillotine; there would also have been no Austrian marriage, no giddy, extravagant Marie Antoinette to come as an additional disturbing element to an already distracted France.

The unfortunate death of the Saxon Princess, her

removal from a sphere of present watchfulness upon her father-in-law, and one of future care of her weak but well-meaning son, made all things possible that subsequently transpired. Had she lived, she would have been strong enough in herself to have controlled d'Aiguillon, a man whom she had indeed only supported for the moment on account of his being the detested enemy of the Choiseuls. In all probability Maria Josepha would not have retained him, but have thrown him overboard for someone better as soon as by his aid she had successfully packed off Choiseul and his sister to their native Lorraine. These things, however, were not to be; so what is the use of conjecture? What purpose can be served by considering from what calamities France might have been saved had not the well-meaning Princess died so inopportunely? Let us rather consider what actually happened, the immediate part taken by the two protagonists, Choiseul and d'Aiguillon, after the Dauphine and her influence had been removed for ever.

Leaving behind her three sons, who were all to be Kings of France, and a daughter who, like one of the sons, was to perish on the scaffold, Maria Josepha died in February, 1767, when the Duc de Choiseul found himself firmer upon his feet than he had felt for some time past. He was, however, yet shaky; he therefore determined that to render his position secure at the head of the Government it would be necessary to plunge France into yet another war. In the meantime he commenced by interfering in Polish affairs, contriving, through his Ambassador Vergennes at Constantinople, to raise a Turkish

army to fight the Russians who were invading Poland. When the Turks had been defeated by the Russians, both on sea and land, the Duc de Choiseul was greatly humiliated, while England exulted. The self-seeking Minister then more than ever resolved on a war against England and Prussia, in which he naturally expected the assistance of Maria Theresa of Austria, to whom he was still paying an enormous annual subsidy. To his disgust and further humiliation in the eyes of France at large, this was the very moment selected by the Emperor Joseph II., the youthful son of Maria Theresa, to indulge in a most friendly conference with his mother's old enemy, Frederick the Great. The disappointed Minister now endeavoured to force Spain to commence the useless warfare, while promising the assistance of France. For the ruling triumverate of the hard and insistent Duc de Praslin, the frail, impulsive and impetuous Duchesse de Gramont, and the light and flippant Choiseul were in an extremity. Despite the constant indolence of the King, they realised only too well that unless a war should break out which would render the continuance of their services to him indispensable, popular clamour and Court intrigue must shortly prevail, with the result that they would be sent about their business.

They had escaped from a great danger by the death of their inveterate enemy the Dauphine, but how could they tell with what new danger, what new plot, they might not daily be threatened? Nor in what manner it might be sprung upon them? As a matter of fact, such a plot to alienate the King was

already in existence only about a year after the death of Maria Josepha. The Duc d'Aiguillon was preparing a trap to catch his Majesty, the bait for which was an excessively-pretty and abandoned young woman.

CHAPTER IX

MADAME DU BARRY

The Dauphine Maria Josepha had during her short period of influence over Louis XV. found it very difficult to prevent his breaking away from her control. There was the greater fear of this owing to the unprincipled behaviour of some of the greatest nobles, who sought to provide the Monarch with a new favourite after the fashion of the Duchesse de Châteauroux or Madame de Pompadour, one who might advance their interests at Court and provide them with unlimited opportunities of dipping their hands into the State money bags.

Fortunately for the Dauphine, she had found an ally in the Princess Adélaïde, and between them they had contrived to thwart the designs of such men as the Prince de Soubise and the Duc de Richelieu. D'Aiguillon had not during the Dauphine's lifetime been in a position to indulge in similar intrigues; moreover, they were in his case unnecessary, for he felt himself secure in the Dauphine's favour, and through her to be about to occupy his rival Choiseul's well-paid post.

Matters were changed when the unfortunate Maria Josepha died so suddenly. The Duc

d'Aiguillon then saw the Duc de Choiseul and his clique as firm as ever in their supremacy over Louis XV., no matter how unpopular they might have become with the nation at large. Notwithstanding the King's previous action in quashing the affair of de la Chalotais, d'Aiguillon felt by no means certain that de Choiseul might not find an opportunity of resuscitating it to his disadvantage. He, therefore, cast about in his mind for some means by which he might advance himself with the King; it mattered little to him how disreputable. He formed accordingly an alliance with his dissolute uncle, the Duc de Richelieu, when the pair of titled rascals decided that if they were to seek the downfall of the Choiseul faction, no plan was likely to prove so efficacious as that of providing the King with a new feminine companion clever enough to be able to lead the dissolute monarch in the direction which they desired.

Talking over together all the ladies of the Court from whom they wished to select a tool, the conspirators were, however, nonplussed completely. For one reason or another, notwithstanding that the choice was numerous, they could not succeed in pitching upon a *grande dame* who was likely at the same time to prove acceptable to Louis XV. and to be relied upon to remain their firm ally after they should have procured her elevation to a disreputable but greatly desired "office," to quote the term then in use for the position of *maîtresse en titre* to the King.

When they were at their wits' end, fortune played into the hands of the pair of nobles, with the result that, abandoning their idea of selecting their new

favourite from among the young ladies of the Court, they decided upon another line altogether. It was one which with any other King than Louis XV. would have been doomed to failure from the outset, but which with a man of his hoggish tastes seemed to offer possibilities of success.

A certain noble named Comte Jean du Barry, a man with little money and less reputation, with whom the Duc de Richelieu was in consultation, suddenly exclaimed: " I have got the very person for you, Monseigneur, in the shape of my own mistress, Mademoiselle Lange. I can answer for it with my head that she is at the same time the most faultless being in existence as regards her person, and the most abandoned. A good-hearted girl for all that, witty and with plenty of brains. She is the very thing to suit the King, and if you will accept her at my hands she will make all our fortunes for us."

To make his fortune once more appealed to the Duc de Richelieu, for he had not only squandered his own, but several others which had been lavished upon him by some of the greatest ladies in France and Austria, where he had been Ambassador for some years. " But," he objected, " this young woman is *bourgeoise*. What we require is a lady to rule the King."

" Bourgeoise, certainly," replied du Barry. " The girl was a milliner when she came to me, and before that I have no idea what she was. I believe her mother was a washerwoman or something of that sort, but she is a treasure all the same. I will bring her and leave her at your hôtel, M. le Duc, then you will have an opportunity of personally judging of her talents and charms."

Mademoiselle Lange was in due course brought to the Duc de Richelieu, and when he and his nephew d'Aiguillon had taken every opportunity of seeing what kind of a girl she was, they were delighted with the ex-milliner and one time *gamine* of the streets of Paris. They found her witty, bold, unabashed at anything or anybody, and distinctly beautiful—merry, moreover, to a degree; never had they met with a young woman who was so frankly cheerful, one with such an unbounded flow of high spirits. The King of late years had been greatly inclined to be morose and melancholy. The two confederates, therefore, agreed that surely, if the King were in need of a new sensation, they could far more easily supply it to him in the person of a Mademoiselle Lange, whom nothing would overawe, than in that of any lady of the Court, who would be apt to be timid and respectful in the presence of Royalty.

Mademoiselle Lange was at that time only twenty-four years of age. She was, therefore, not too old to prove acceptable to Louis XV. There was, however, a difficulty to be got over before she could be brought to his presence, in the shape of the Sieur Lebel, the King's valet, who had, it would seem, already refused flatly to receive his paragon at the hands of the Comte Jean du Barry, as being too low-bred. The scruples of that Cerberus were, however, overcome by the Duc d'Aiguillon, who found the valet once more reinstated in his suite of apartments called the Birdcage.

In the same manner as Marie Jeanne Lange, or Vaubernier as she was sometimes called, had been brought to Richelieu, that lively and lovely aspirant to Royal favour was now taken to Lebel and left with

him in the Birdcage, in order that from his great experience in such matters he might determine whether or no she was a fit person to be presented by him to the King.

After the interview, the Sieur Lebel expressed himself to the Duc d'Aiguillon as being perfectly satisfied that the volatile Mademoiselle Lange would serve to amuse the jaded Monarch for an hour or two, or possibly a day or two, but he added that he was convinced that from the extreme freedom of her manners the King would support her no longer. How mistaken, however, was that man of experience, who had for so long played the part of Mercury to the Jove of Louis XV.!

The plan of the conspirators having been to supply the worn-out Monarch with an entirely new sensation, far from instructing Mademoiselle Lange to assume a modesty of demeanour, a certain amount of decorum, in the King's presence, they advised her to exaggerate if possible her amusing extravagances of vulgarity. The result was far beyond what had been anticipated. Delighted with the low-bred girl's abandoned freaks and giddy sayings, the King vowed that never had he met with anyone so amusing, never seen a woman who combined such lovely features with such a merry abandon. He declared that he found Mademoiselle Lange sparkling with wit and intelligence such as he had never seen in any of the noble ladies of the aristocracy, and expressed the intention never more to part with his new-found treasure!

Lebel was shocked; he ventured to remonstrate with his master, to expostulate and point out to him that there were some things which even a Louis XV.

could not do, and that one of them was to establish a Marie Jeanne Lange as a permanency.

The King would not, however, listen to him; the familiarity with which the new mistress treated him delighted him. It was something so entirely new for the King to be spoken to by a woman as if he were merely a lover of her own selection. He now again horrified his valet. His passion having become intense, Louis informed Lebel that he intended to raise Mademoiselle Lange to the ranks of the nobility, and to introduce her at Versailles upon a footing with the most noble ladies of the Kingdom.

"But, Sire! Sire! the Princesses! Mesdames Adélaïde, Victoire and Louise! What will they say? Think of it, Sire—and the Court!"

The King snapped his fingers. "My poor Dominique," he replied, "she is adorable, and I am determined to give her this proof of my tenderness, so say no more. She shall be presented at Court, and nobody will say a word."

But how was such a woman as Marie Jeanne to be ennobled so as to render her eligible for presentation at Court? There was to be no difficulty about that matter, for her former protector, the astute Comte Jean du Barry had already thought of a plan of which Louis XV. highly approved.

The remonstrances of the old valet became, however, so violent when he heard of it and saw that the King was determined to have his way, that Louis, losing all patience, threatened to knock his brains out with the tongs if he would not hold his peace. Then only was it that the Sieur Lebel retired muttering to his Birdcage, while grumbling loudly

MADAME DU BARRY

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that times were changed indeed when such things could transpire at Versailles.

The plan which was to make of Marie Jeanne a lady of title was simple enough, but poor old Lebel did not live to see it put into execution, for two days after the King had brandished the tongs over his head and threatened to brain him with them, he died of grief at his Royal master's conduct. The Duc de Choiseul knew of the plan, however, and opposed it even more than had the unfortunate valet. The King, nevertheless, carried it through. The Comte Jean du Barry had a brother, Comte Guillaume du Barry, and this noble was largely paid to marry his brother's former mistress—at all events to make a wife of her in name only. The ceremony having been completed, Comte Guillaume was not even allowed to dine with his wife. Nevertheless, he remained upon excellent terms with the Comtesse du Barry. The scheme upon which the King had set his heart of her presentation at Court could not, however, be accomplished at once, so great was the opposition from all quarters, especially from Mesdames the Princesses. Thus many months passed after by her marriage Marie Jeanne had been raised to the ranks of the *noblesse*, and still there was no presentation. In the meantime the Comtesse, who was, above all, what is called *bonne fille*, made friends with everybody who would be upon friendly terms with her, and they were many. For when it was seen that she was to appear as no mere shooting star upon the firmament of Versailles, but as a fixed star of great brilliancy, crowds flocked to the doors of the *bonne fille*. Madame du Barry soon became popular with the greater number of those who sought

her, from her open-handed generosity, her magnificence of giving. For, reckless to a degree as to the money she drew from the State, this extravagant young woman contrived to draw no less than eighteen millions of livres in one year, the greater part of which she gave away with both hands. Thus Comte Jean du Barry soon realised his dreams of making his fortune, while her husband became rich and her mother was brought up from her obscure retreat in the country and richly established in Paris. Even a so-called godfather, who had caused Marie Jeanne to obtain such instruction as she had acquired in a convent in her early youth, was also largely recompensed for his former generosity. His name was Dumonceau, and there were not wanting those who said that he stood to her in the same paternal relation that the Banker-General Lenormand was supposed to have held to Mademoiselle Poisson, later the Marquise de Pompadour.

While waiting for the famous presentation to take place, the Ducs de Richelieu and d'Aiguillon clung closely to the skirts of the *protegée* whom they had placed, their object being to set her against the Duc de Choiseul. This Minister played his cards very badly with the Comtesse. She was willing to make a friend of him as of all others, and made various advances, the only result of which was that the good natured girl was severely snubbed for her pains. To say that " la du Barry " was snubbed is, perhaps, not exactly correct, for she could not be made to feel the indignity intended by the malevolent in speech, being too good humoured in her own disposition. What, however, she had no difficulty in understanding, when told by the King, was the fact

that the Duc de Choiseul and his sister were among those who most bitterly opposed her presentation at Court.

Having learned the Duc de Choiseul's enmity, the Comtesse du Barry listened all the more readily to the Duc de Richelieu. He, being the First Gentleman of the King's Chamber, had daily opportunities of seeing her, and took advantage of these to transform her into a lady, giving her lessons in manners, language and deportment for use in public, when he found in the ex-milliner an apt pupil!

With the King when alone the Comtesse did not, however, change her ways in the slightest degree, and when speaking to him she always addressed Louis XV. in the most familiar style as " France " or " La France." The Duc de Richelieu, among his other lessons, took pains also to instruct Madame du Barry in current politics, especially pointing out to her the terrible faults committed by the Duc de Choiseul in his Austrian policy, whereby he had denuded France of both money and men, and was now without funds to place the army upon a proper footing. Knowing originally nothing whatever of politics, and caring nothing whatever about them, the Comtesse would have paid little or no attention to these matters so long as the money rolled into her own lap had but Choiseul the good sense to modify his attitude. But while Princes of the Blood Royal, such as the Prince de Conti, now seemed to consider it an honour to be admitted to the intimacy of the girl who had from the age of fourteen been little better than a street-walker, and thus earned the King's highest favour, the Duc de Choiseul continued to endeavour to insult the Comtesse upon

every possible occasion. By this foolish attitude he merely played into the hands of his enemies, while still continuing to endeavour to force France into a useless war.

Had he but shewn to the King's favourite the merest politeness, instead of proclaiming daily everywhere, as did his sister de Gramont—that she was impossible—he might for long have kept his place at the head of the State. As it was, when in the end his disgrace came the Duc de Choiseul had but himself to thank.

CHAPTER X

THE COMTESSE DU BARRY AT COURT

The Duc de Choiseul and his sister, the Duchesse de Gramont continued to show their disdain of the merry Comtesse du Barry until, without any urgings from either d'Aiguillon or Richelieu, she learned to hate them in return.

Without, however, taking any active steps to crush those who were but waiting for an opportunity to crush her, the King's last favourite led a life of jollity, making things lively at Versailles, where she was surrounded and treated with adulation by the young and frivolous courtiers of both sexes. Indeed, many of the older women also joined in the noisy gaieties and pranks of the laughter-loving woman, with whom it was, above all things, necessary to stand in well while she was in such high favour with the King. Enjoying herself thus vastly in the most haphazard fashion with those who by their rank and position should have shewn the decency to avoid her, the Comtesse du Barry led the tone of the Court, which was never more openly, more frivolously immoral.

At length came the time for her formal presenta-

tion to the King, whose wife, the virtuous Queen Marie Lesczynska, had died a year or two earlier, and was therefore fortunately spared the spectacle of open degradation to which Louis XV. proposed to treat the Court in spite of all opposition.

To the last, however, there were those who openly maintained that this opposition, notably that of Mesdames the Princesses, would prove strong enough to upset the King's plans, and wagers were freely laid that the Comtesse du Barry would never be presented to the King with these Princesses by his side, and consequently compelled openly to recognise their father's low-born and vulgar mistress. The Dauphine Maria Josepha, had she lived, would undoubtedly have been able to prevent such a presentation, but the Princess Adélaïde, once omnipotent with her father, was not strong enough alone. The day had gone by when her influence without extraordinary support could count for anything.

It was, however, vainly imagined by Madame du Barry's enemies that something would be done by somebody, some steps be taken by Choiseul or his sister perhaps which would spoil the Monarch's intention of having his own way, prevent the fulfilment of the ambition of the ex-milliner, ex-street-walker. Vague whispers were to be heard of some "accident" impending which would make the presentation impossible.

The appointed night arrived, and Louis XV. had assembled around him a full Court. His daughters, the Princesses were there, the Diplomatic Circle was present, the Ministers, headed by the Duc de

Choiseul, and the King's Household, of whom the head was the Duc de Richelieu, were all in attendance.

As for the rank and file of the nobility, curiosity to see what might transpire upon this eventful occasion had drawn to Versailles members of the *noblesse* from all parts of France. Never, indeed, had there been such a brilliant assemblage at the Court. It must be admitted that many of the nobles and *grandes dames* assembled had, however, been drawn together merely by secret spite and jealousy of the favourite, upon whose part they hoped to see some faltering or nervous blunder which would render her ridiculous in the eyes of the august assembly. They were preparing to have a good sneer, a laugh at the expense of this impossible Mademoiselle Lange, who would doubtless fall over her own train or sink to the ground in the neighbourhood of the door covered with confusion.

How great was the disappointment of these when they were baulked of their expected satisfaction—for no Comtesse du Barry made her appearance! Half an hour passed, then an hour after the usual time for a presentation, and still there was no fresh arrival at the Palace. The time was approaching when etiquette would render it necessary that all those who had come to see the show should take their departure. The Court was dull to a degree, no one could speak above a whisper, only those who had betted against any presentation taking place looking cheerful. Triumphant glances were thrown by the Duc de Choiseul and the over-dressed Duchesse de Gramont at the Duc de Richelieu, the Duc d'Aiguil-

lon, and other supporters of Madame du Barry, who tried to reply by scornful looks, but were too crestfallen to shew aught but the despondency that they felt. While the Princesses tittered together behind the King's back, of all of those present in the great salon at Versailles that night none was so ill at ease as the King. Nor could Louis XV. conceal his impatience, his anxiety as his beloved mistress did not appear upon the scene. Making no pretence to conceal this impatience, time after time the disappointed Monarch pulled out his watch, glanced at it feverishly, and then whispered some word to the Duc de Richelieu.

After even forgetting his dignity so far as to go to one of the windows and pull back the curtains, only to see nothing of any new arrivals in the great and brilliantly-lighted courtyard of the Palace, the King, in a rage at the satisfaction he saw displayed upon many faces, including those of his daughters, muttered to the Duc de Richelieu that he had better defer the audience until another night. The Duc ran to the window once more, and, returning immediately, whispered to his Majesty, "I see a carriage, Sire, just entering the courtyard, and I recognise the liveries of the Comtesse du Barry."

"What a scolding I will give the little minx," returned the King, but added, with a face all smiles, "I wonder what on earth has kept her. I will hardly speak to the wretch."

What had kept the Comtesse du Barry had been simply her coiffeur in Paris, twelve miles from Versailles, who had detained the *débutante* at this great Court function for an extra hour in order to make her the more beautiful upon her arrival.

A minute later, and there was a hush in the Grand Chamber, as the doors were thrown open and the Comtesse was ushered in.

Far from showing the slightest confusion, and apparently quite unaware, or careless of the fact, that she had kept the Monarch upon tenter hooks, the Princesses and all the Court waiting, she advanced confidently smiling, a radiant vision of beauty and perfectly dressed. Even her enemies were bound to confess that Marie Jeanne wore an air of perfect nobility as she advanced through the two rows of courtiers and ladies, and with a well-bred ease first made the courtesies of ceremony to the King and then to the Princesses. Her triumph was complete, and now it was the turn of the Duc de Choiseul and the Duchesse de Gramont to look crestfallen, while the King, the Duc de Richelieu, and all of the party of the favourite wore the most jubilant air of satisfaction.

Far from administering to the young adventuress the scolding which he had promised, Louis XV. complimented her upon the brilliancy of her appearance, when all present, taking their cue from the King, thronged around the Comtesse to add their praises and congratulations to those of the monarch.

After this celebrated presentation, Madame du Barry, now one of the Court, became absolutely supreme at Versailles. This fact did not, however, induce the Duc de Choiseul and Madame de Gramont to modify their spiteful attitude in the least.

The former had for so long tyrannised over the

King that he expected even yet to bring about the downfall of the courtesan; he made, however, a great mistake. Nevertheless, the Duc de Choiseul, who had recently re-captured the Empress Maria Theresa, imagined himself more than ever secure by his renewed alliance with Austria. He had lately sought to ally the King in marriage with one of the young daughters of Maria Theresa, who went by the name of Maria Antoinetta, or, as she was called in French, Marie Antoinette. This young Princess was but little more than fourteen years of age in 1770, while Louis XV. had seen sixty summers. It was not, however, the discrepancy of ages which deterred the dissolute King from accepting the young Austrian girl as his bride, but his mad infatuation for the giddy Comtesse du Barry. While, therefore, Louis XV. declined for himself the honour of an alliance with a mere child, notwithstanding that she was described as already beautiful, he allowed Choiseul to continue his matrimonial negotiations with the Empress-Queen, but on behalf of his grandson. This grandson, Louis, who, until his father's death, had been known as the Duc de Berry, had now become Dauphin. He was sixteen years of age, very sedate and quiet, and not in the least inclined to marriage, above all with an Austrian. Despite the youth's distaste to the idea of taking a wife from Austria, Choiseul proved successful in his plans, by which he merely sought his own aggrandisement, and brought about the marriage to his own great satisfaction. The Comte Jean du Barry was meanwhile openly lamenting that his brother, Comte Guillaume, the husband in name of the Comtesse, could not be induced by some

means or other to remove himself from this world. "If only that brother of mine would die," Comte Jean would remark, "I would make the King marry his wife; it would not take long. Did not Louis XIV. marry that bigoted old prude Madame de Maintenon? I should have the pleasure of giving to the King my mistress as a wife—that would be piquant!"

It may be noted that the Comtesse du Barry while the King's favourite does not appear to have thought it worth her while to entirely break off her old relations with Comte Jean du Barry—nor, on the other hand, did the King think it necessary to remain absolutely faithful to the Jeanne that he adored and whom he vowed to surpass all other women. So little was this the case that Louis XV., whom nothing charmed like variety, even encouraged his immoral favourite to provide him with other ladies, after the fashion of Madame de Pompadour. Such were the ethics of the Court of France! the customs that had been already established when Agnès Sorel, the incomparable "Dame de Beauté" of Charles VII., supplied that King with her first cousin, Antoinette de Maignelais, while remaining paramount herself. Like that celebrated Egeria of "the Dauphin," whom Jeanne d'Arc had crowned at Rheims, Marie Jeanne du Barry, having reduced the King to a nonentity and assumed his importance herself, thought it wiser to keep him contented by her own action and thus guard him from external intrigue. The two Comtes du Barry had a pretty niece, a dowerless girl named Mademoiselle de Tournon. Informing this young lady that there was plenty of money yet available in France, and

that she would make her fortune for her if she left herself in her hands, " la du Barry " presented her niece by marriage to the King. While Louis was greatly pleased at this little attention on the part of his *bonne amie*, the fortune of Mademoiselle du Tournon was soon *un fait accompli*.

Marie Jeanne remained, however, herself securely at the top of the tree, while having relegated Louis XV. to the position of a kind of phantom at Versailles, where nothing transpired without her consent.

After the arrival of Marie Antoinette at Versailles, although when in the King's presence compelled to treat the Comtesse with courtesy, that young Austrian Princess, now Dauphine, greatly resented the presence and assured position of the favourite. She was encouraged by the King's now middle-aged daughters to copy their example and to behave rudely to Madame du Barry, and readily listened to them rather than to the counsels of her time-serving mother, Maria Theresa, who, upon sending her daughter from the Austrian Court, had advised her strongly to keep on good terms with the King's *maîtresse en titre*.

Although absolutely without pride of any sort, " la du Barry " resented this treatment on the part of the Princesses, whom she had done nothing to molest in any way. She was not afraid of them, and therefore began to indulge in retaliation. Upon one occasion, when the Court was at the palace at Fontainebleau, as Madame du Barry was passing in the courtyard, Madame Adélaïde and Marie Antoinette leaned out of a window and indulged in loud and mocking laughter. Quite undisturbed,

the Comtesse came to a stand below the window and faced the insulting Princesses with a haughty stare. She remained thus, greatly to the amusement of some members of the Court, until the young Dauphine and the Princess Adélaïde were abashed and compelled to withdraw from the window. After this little passage of arms, the Comtesse du Barry took to out-dressing the Austrian Princess, who, although herself immoderately fond of fine clothes and jewellery, was quite unable to compete with the King's favourite. This latter would now take especial pains to eclipse the youthful Marie Antoinette at the Opera, where she would appear in a box situated immediately over that of the Dauphine, and with her magnificent Court dress literally blazing with diamonds. There was no extravagance in which Louis XV. would not encourage the young woman in whom he took such delight, and it was at this period that he gave orders to the Court jewellers to prepare for the Comtesse du Barry the famous diamond necklace which was to cost a million and a half of livres. This necklace she was never to receive, as the King died before all of the necessary stones had been cut and set, but the bauble was to become the cause of much trouble to Marie Antoinette ten years after her husband had ascended the throne of France and she had become Queen.

It was only a year after the Duc de Choiseul had succeeded in making the Austrian marriage which was so unpopular in France when his sister had to leave Versailles in a hurry. To the Duchesse de Gramont was traced the authorship of a series of indelicate and ribald songs which held up both the

King and Madame du Barry to ridicule. When the Comtesse became assured that she had to thank her enemy for this latest insult, she went to the King and told him that she had stood as much of the impertinence of Madame de Gramont as she intended to endure, and that the Duchess must go at once. Thereupon Louis XV. immediately signed a peremptory order abruptly banishing the intriguing Duchesse de Gramont. The Duc de Choiseul was soon to share his sister's fate. He had undoubtedly assisted in the circulation of the indecent ballads, but so averse was the King to any changes in the Government that for a short time longer he supported the ill-advised Minister. The Comtesse du Barry had, however, made up her mind that the time was come for a change to be made. She pointed out to the indolent King that unless he sent Choiseul packing the Duc would undoubtedly drag France into a new war with England, and suggested either the Duc de Richelieu or the Duc d'Aiguillon as his successor. Telling his mistress that he could not accept that old rake Richelieu "as he was only fitted to conduct a bedchamber intrigue," Louis accepted d'Aiguillon from the hands of the Comtesse. At the same time he astonished Choiseul, by banishing him to Chanteloup in Alsace.

Directly after she had got rid of both of these bitter enemies, the Comtesse du Barry was the author of another political coup. The Parliament of Paris, which had been allied to Choiseul, was commencing to make itself unpleasant to the King when, obeying the instructions of those behind her, Marie Jeanne persuaded her Royal Protector to

banish the men of the robe *en masse*. The manner in which she accomplished her purpose was by frightening Louis XV. The Comtesse possessed a famous painting of Charles I. of England by Van Dyck. In this picture the unfortunate King was accompanied by his page, whose name had been Barry, and whom Madame du Barry claimed as a relation of her husband's family. It was, indeed, merely on account of this page that the ignorant Comtesse, who knew nothing of history whatever, had bought the painting.

To this picture the bold Marie Jeanne conducted the King. Holding Louis familiarly by the chin and making him look up at Charles I., she said to him: " La France, if thou dost not exile thy Parliament, they will cut off thy head likewise!"

Although there was no analogy between a mere body of Magistrates like the Parliament of Paris and an English House of Commons, Louis was alarmed, and caused all of the *conseillers* of his recalcitrant Parliament to be arrested in their beds that very night (January 20th, 1771).

After these bold actions, by the former of which she undoubtedly saved France from the horrors of a new war, the Comtesse du Barry left politics alone, while continuing to lead a pleasure-loving and extravagant existence until the death of the King once known as le Bien-Aimé in 1774.

She was then arrested by the desire of Marie Antoinette and confined for a time in a convent. Having been set at liberty, during the French Revolution she had been for some time in England when she foolishly returned to Paris to obtain her

jewels. She was recognised, and seized by the *sansculottes* in November 1793, and soon after wards the poor woman was dragged off to the guillotine, vainly screaming and imploring for mercy until the lips that a King had kissed were silenced for ever in the basket of bloody sawdust.

MADAME DU BARRY
From the painting by Drouais

CHAPTER XI

MADAME LEGROS

The distinguished French historian, Michelet, has declared the terrible Revolution which stained with blood the later years of the 18th Century to have been "the reaction of equity, the tardy advent of Eternal Justice."

By it were cast down the old tyrannies of a thousand years, those of the Monarchy and the privileged classes, the nobility and the clergy largely recruited from the ranks of the *noblesse*. From and by the favour of the Monarch all rights, rewards, and punishments were supposed to exist, and the Monarch it was who, while giving the example of oppression himself, not only tolerated in others the right to oppress, but delegated it, under his sign manual, to those upon whom he allowed the light of his favour to shine. In nothing was this fact more evident than in the terrible system of State prisons in France, the awful iniquity of the abuse of the *lettre de cachet*.

This was an instrument signed by the King by which his direct orders were expressed. Originally he maintained the use of the *lettre de cachet* as his own prerogative, to be employed when ordering the

banishment or imprisonment without trial of some noble who had fallen into disfavour. In the hands of the Monarch the exercise of this arbitrary document was often enough unjust and cruel, but how much more so when, as a mark of the favour and indulgence of a King or Queen, the *lettre de cachet* in blank, with the Royal signature at its foot, was delivered over to those who wished to carry out some private act of vengeance.

There were in France some twenty horrible State prisons, many of which were damp, unwarmed, and simply crawling with disgusting vermin, which, apart from all other horrors, made life a hell for the hundreds of occupants of either sex. There were, in addition, thirty other prisons in Paris alone, some of which, such as the awful Salpêtrierè, Bicêtre, and Saint Lazare, were usually crowded. The first-named was filled with women of disreputable character, but some were used indiscriminately for those of either sex. Without proper sanitation, and owing to the promiscuous herding of at times as many as seven thousand prisoners together, as in the Salpêtrierè, these prisons became the breeding places of disease and hot-beds of the most abominable vice. There were, in addition, the galleys, long, low-built ships propelled by oars, in which those condemned for crime were chained to the seats and compelled to toil at the oar as galley-slaves.

For more than a hundred years before the French Revolution it became possible, owing to the Monarch's delegated favour, for private persons to consign any enemy for a whole lifetime to any of the above-mentioned places of confinement. All that was needed was a *lettre de cachet*, which ordered

the arrest and detention of any person without stating any period for which the imprisonment was to last. Nor was a *lettre de cachet* at all difficult to procure for those who owned the friendship of a Minister, or money enough to pay either the Minister himself or one of his subordinate clerks.

From the time of Louis XIII. when, under the régime of Cardinal Richelieu, the cutting off of a head or two was such a frequent event, the ruling Kings and Regents had to a great extent changed the fashion. Decapitation sounded cruel, and, therefore, in order to show how merciful they were, these rulers of France often merely consigned to an eternal oblivion those to whom they considered it expedient to show their greatest disfavour. The chief, and strictly Royal, State prison in France had for upwards of five centuries been the gloomy fortress in Paris known as the Bastille, and to this immense edifice, which abounded both in dungeons and more comfortable places of detention, it was the custom of the Kings to send those persons of either sex to whom they wished to shew a mark of their resentment. This confinement frequently lasted only for a few months, but was often for life. Nor was imprisonment in the Bastille by any means always an unpleasant experience. The class of prisoners there confined was most frequently that of the nobility, the magistracy of the Parliaments or hangers on of these who belonged to gentle or good *bourgeois* families.

Except when for any particular reason excessive rigour was ordered, persons with money enough to pay could be provided with comfortable apartments and order in all their meals from outside upon any

scale that they might choose. Frequently those confined were the personal friends of the Governor of the Bastille, always a noble of high rank, who would from time to time invite them to his own table. There was until the reign of Louis XVI. a garden in which the favoured prisoners were allowed to take their recreation, while prisoners were also permitted to take daily exercise upon the summit of the huge towers and on the battlements.

The greatest license between those of the opposite sexes was permitted in the Bastille by the connivance of the gaolers, while great nobles were, as in the case of the Duc de Richelieu, even permitted to receive the visits of their mistresses from without. This scapegrace noble was thus visited by two young Princesses of the Blood-Royal, who were rivals in the volatile Duc's very large heart. They were Mademoiselle de Valois, the daughter of the Regent who had sent him to the Bastille, and her cousin, Mademoiselle de Charolais, the daughter of the Prince de Condé. These Princesses did not find the Duc, however, one of the favoured prisoners provided with a comfortable apartment. On the contrary, the hearts of the flighty young ladies were torn with grief to find their mutual lover in an octagonal dungeon, which only received air from a long and narrow slit in the wall. It was without a table, bed, books or armchairs, very cold, and reeking with mould and damp.

While threatening to cut off his head upon this, his second term of imprisonment in the Bastille, the good-natured Duc d'Orléans had not the slightest intention of carrying out his threat. It was one, indeed, merely intended to terrify all the ladies of

the Regent's Court, who were daily importuning him to restore their darling Richelieu to their arms. The Regent had, however, several treacheries to avenge. Richelieu had joined with the Duc and Duchesse du Maine in a plot with Philip V. of Spain against him; he had also boastfully filched from the Duc d'Orléans several favourites of the female sex one after another. The Regent, therefore, only treated the Duc de Richelieu as he deserved for his treason to him in his State capacity and treachery in that of a friend, and would have been well within his rights had he sent him to the scaffold.

It was after spending hundreds of thousands of livres to bribe the officials of the Bastille to allow them to pass their evenings with the Duc in his mouldy dungeon that the two Princesses, from being rivals, became allies in order to procure his freedom. At the end of six months, Philippe d'Orléans allowed himself to be moved by his daughter's prayers, generously forgave Richelieu, who was pretending to be very ill, and allowed him his liberty.

That all those who were confined in the Bastille on account of the Spanish plot were not treated with such rigour as the Duc de Richelieu became apparent, by the naïve declaration of an intriguing young lady with no principles who was confined in the Bastille at the same time as the Duc de Richelieu, and on account of the same Spanish plot, in which she had acted as the agent of that ever restless Princess of the House of Condé, the Duchesse du Maine. This was Mademoiselle Delaunay, who became eventually Madame de Staal (not Staël).

This young woman, who had not long previously

been concerned in a plot for the seizing and prompt hanging of that wonderful Scotch financier John Law, seems indeed to have had her fling while confined in the great fortress of the State prison. For she left it on record that until she was a prisoner in the Bastille she "never knew what real happiness was!"

The lot of the lady shut up in the State prison was not, however, by any means always such a bed of roses, especially if, as frequently happened, she happened to be some young Protestant who had refused forcible conversion. We have the authority of an eminent French writer who was born in the Revolutionary days for saying that these unhappy ladies were frequently the victims of the gaolers, and alternately starved or pampered by the Jesuit Almoners of the prisons until they became their mistresses. While one poor lady strangled herself rather than submit, others became unwillingly the mothers of children. For one reason or another the prisons were usually kept full, at all events during the period of about a hundred years during which they were controlled by a dynasty consisting of three persons in the same family.

The Marquis de Châteauneuf, his son the Duc de la Vrillierè, and his grandson the Marquis de Saint-Florentin, who also became Duc de la Vrillierè, were in succession the Ministers of the Department of Prisons and of the *lettre de cachet*. The last-named only died in the year 1777, three years after the accession of Louis XVI. In order that they should justify the existence of their Department in the State, these three nobles during their terrible reign served out *lettres de cachet* with a very liberal

hand. When the supply of Protestant prisoners ran short, they supplied *lettres de cachet* freely to the Jesuits for the incarceration of their enemies, the Jansenists, the *philosophes*, such as Voltaire and Diderot, and other men of letters suspected of a free-thinking tendency.

Nor was Saint-Florentin so niggardly as to serve out his *letters de cachet* only to those who wished to employ them to imprison their religious foes. He is known during his régime to have issued out no less than fifty thousand of these documents *in blank*. These, which often passed from hand to hand, became the object of barter to be used for the imprisonment of man or woman by man or woman.

Thus it often happened that father imprisoned son or wife, as in the case of the Marquis de Mirabeau, who shut up for years both his wife and his son, the famous orator. A jealous woman, or one tired of her husband, shut him up by the use of a *lettre de cachet*. A man who could not win a lady over to his love shut up that lady and the man whom he suspected of being her successful lover. Again, a man who owed another money which he could not or would not pay, having procured the necessary little bit of paper, suddenly had his unsuspecting creditor seized, to be shut up in some horrible prison, where he lived to be devoured by loathsome vermin and with bones racked with disease long after he had been forgotten by the world. Sometimes, and we think there is such a case cited by Carlyle, he remained in prison long after he had forgotten his own name and identity! While utterly unaware of the fact that it was owing to the act of those that he considered as his nearest and dearest that he found him-

self lodged in some horrible dungeon, or thrust in among a terrifying horde of thieves and prostitutes, the poor prisoner often never heard of those nearest and dearest again for so long as he lived.

In numerous instances the man or woman confined by a *lettre de cachet*, which had been given to the police by some person who had long since forgotten such a trivial occurrence, lived on for many years while being informed of absolutely nothing that occurred in the outside world. An instance of this was seen after the taking of the Bastille by the mob on July 14th, 1789. Then one of the rescued prisoners when released from his dungeon enquired, as his first question, if Louis XV. was still on the throne—that King having been dead for fifteen years!

To see how different was the position and freedom at time of those prisoners who were great nobles, it is, however, interesting to look at the picture drawn of the Bastille a hundred and fifty years earlier by that intriguing, love-making, duelling scamp, the Cardinal de Retz. Upon going to the Bastille, to interest some of the prisoners in a plot, headed by the Comte de Soissons, against the life and power of Cardinal Richelieu, Retz found these prisoners prepared to dispose of the fortress, its Governor, its garrison and its arsenal, as if they were not prisoners but its absolute commanders. They were the Maréchal-Duc de Vitrè, who had caused the assassination of Concino-Concini, the lover of Queen Marie de Médicis; the Maréchal de Bassompierre, once the boon companion of Henri IV.; M. du Fargis, husband of a most immoral lady, who once at Lyons put her immorality to a strange use in order

to serve Anne of Austria; M. du Coudrai-Montpensier, who came of a very great house; and the Comte de Crémail, an old gentleman eighty years of age, who was prepared to head the insurrection in Paris while nominally in durance vile in the Bastille.

This Comte was, however, a very rich noble, who was able upon one of his visits to the fortress to furnish the enterprising de Retz with ready cash to the extent of 12,000 crowns for the furtherance of the insurrection, and we merely cite this instance to shew how different were the conditions of prisoners in the Bastille at different epochs.

After these preliminary remarks, to explain the varied conditions of imprisonment in connection with the use of the infamous *lettres de cachet*, we will now proceed to the famous case of which they are merely introductory, that of the prisoner Latude and Madame Legros, who braved all for his rescue. Somewhere about the year 1754, when Madame de Pompadour had been for some nine years the mistress of Louis XV., a young man named Latude played what may be considered in the light of a practical joke upon that Royal courtesan. With what intention we cannot say, young Latude took his pen and wrote to the extravagant Marquise to apprise her of a plot against her person, which plot had no existence save in his own fertile imagination.

Taking the jest in very ill part, Madame de Pompadour vindictively made use of a *lettre de cachet*, by which she consigned Latude to the Bastille. In order that he should have ample leisure to ponder upon the heinousness of writing to the King's mistress statements that were not justified by fact, the

Marquise de Pompadour further determined that the foolish young man should remain imprisoned in a dungeon for the term of his natural life.

For some years Latude remained in the Bastille, where he underwent a rigorous imprisonment. During this period he wrote several imploring letters to the wife of Lenormant d'Étioles begging her forgiveness and his release, but the hard-hearted woman treated his prayers with the same cold-blooded indifference as she had those of her husband, when he implored her not to abandon him and her surviving daughter to become the King's paramour.

Failing to obtain his liberty, the unhappy prisoner set his wits to work for a long period to see if he could not contrive to escape from the gloomy fortress. In this endeavour he eventually succeeded, it was said, by the use of a very long rope ladder, which was publicly exhibited during the Revolutionary period as the means by which he had lowered himself from the massive walls of the Bastille.

A modern French writer, M. Funck Brentano, has denied that Latude used these means of obtaining egress from his prison, but, whether or no, he obtained his liberty somehow. Being safely at large and having retired to the country, one would have thought that the unfortunate man would have been careful to avoid falling once more into the clutches of the woman who had shewn herself so vindictive. On the contrary, he wrote to Madame de Pompadour, begging her to clear his name from any criminal taint and to acquiesce in the freedom which he had contrived to procure for himself.

The answer of the mistress of Louis XV. was

prompt. She sent police officials to seize Latude, and threw him into another prison—the fortress of Vincennes. After a few years spent in Vincennes meditating upon the hardness of his fate, Latude escaped again. In some extraordinary manner he found the gates open, and simply walked out without let or hindrance.

Now surely it would have been imagined that Latude would have kept concealed! Long imprisonment had, however, only rendered him obstinate —he was determined to have his name cleared and to obtain a pardon—this time not from the King's concubine, but from the King himself. He went to Versailles and almost succeeded in obtaining an audience of Louis XV. The spiteful Marquise heard of his presence just in time, and caused him to be arrested in the ante-chamber of the King's apartments while waiting to be ushered in to the Royal presence.

Upon this occasion Madame de Pompadour caused Latude to be consigned as she hoped to eternal oblivion in the horrible thieves' prison of Bicêtre, and in this awful den, while devoured by vermin, he remained until after the death of the Marquise in 1764. Ten years later, the death of Louis XV. and accession of his grandson, Louis XVI., still found Latude in prison, his strong constitution having enabled him to survive all the horrors of his dreadful surroundings. Unlike his grandfather, the young King was of a kind-hearted disposition, and those who, like the Minister de Malesherbes and the Cardinal de Rohan, had already interested themselves in the unhappy prisoner's fate, now hoped that he would be released.

Louis XVI. was, however, tied by tradition, and it was against his principles to act rashly where a State prisoner was concerned. The man had been confined under the sign manual of his grandfather in the Bastille, and the Bastille represented essentially the authority of the Monarchy. The young King, therefore, left Latude to rot in prison for six years longer. One day, some twenty-six years after his first imprisonment, Latude persuaded a turnkey, who had for long been one of his gaolers, to take a letter from him to a gentleman celebrated for his philanthropy, of whom he had heard his fellow prisoners speak as one likely to interest himself in the oppressed. With great detail the prisoner described all that he had undergone since his initial act of folly had gained him the hatred of a King's mistress, some quarter of a century earlier. Unfortunately, instead of delivering the letter, the turnkey got drunk and lost it not far from the gates of the prison.

It so happened that a young married woman, who kept a small haberdasher's shop, and supported herself by needlework while her husband taught Latin, saw it lying in the mud, picked it up, and read it. So graphic was it in all its details that the young woman—whose name was Madame Legros—was moved to tears of sympathy. Straightway she declared her intention of attempting to procure the release of the unfortunate victim of a cruel woman whose vengeance had for so long survived her death.

Despite the warnings given her that she would do well to leave the matter alone, or she might herself suffer, Madame Legros set at once to work where

those far more powerful than herself had already failed. She soon discovered the truth, that the various Lieutenant Generals of Police, usually spoken of briefly as the Lieutenants de Police, who had held office since the incarceration of Latude had already succeeded in covering up the injustice of the system by which they kept in confinement those whom they knew to be devoid of offence. Finding that M. de Sartines had falsely reported Latude to Louis XVI. as a dangerous madman, she went to him boldly and begged him to relent and acknowledge that Latude was perfectly sane, urged him to represent this fact to the King and obtain his release.

The great Lieutenant Général de Police was astounded at her daring—he threatened her with the Bastille. Madame Legros, quite undaunted, threatened de Sartines in turn, and, with head held high, the little haberdasher left the Minister's office to seek help elsewhere.

Filled with but one idea, while neglecting her business in its pursuit, to great nobles, great ladies, great ecclesiastics, philosophers and philanthropists, Madame Legros proceeded in turn. Never would she take no for an answer, but returned to the point again and again, urging those whom she visited by every argument in her power to persuade the King to accord his liberty to the unfortunate Latude. In this manner three years passed away, while the name of Madame Legros became everywhere known, and, through her efforts, sympathy with Latude was kindled in the highest quarters. While at her solicitation personages as great as the Cardinal Prince de Rohan went no less than three times to the King to combat the lies of Sartines, Madame Legros

herself commenced to suffer in her reputation. It was openly said of her that she must be the guilty lover of the man Latude (whom she had never seen) thus to put herself out on his account.

Madame Legros laughed at the calumny, and went on with her mission, even after Louis XVI. had flatly declared that no, never would he release Latude! Determined to conquer the King, she sought the Princesses, his aunts, walking miles in the snow in the winter time to get to Versailles at a time when she was expecting shortly to be confined. She sprained her ankle, but hobbled on to the Royal palace, where she saw the favourite femme de chambre of the Princesses, a lady named Duchesne with a kindly disposition. As Madame Duchesne was taking to her mistresses the petition which the courageous seamstress had brought, an abbé connected with the Court tore it from her hands, and thus prevented its presentation to the King. Meanwhile public feeling was becoming everywhere aroused, and the horrors of the Bastille were upon everybody's lips. The action of Madame Legros had, indeed, much to do with the destruction of the great prison by the infuriated people of Paris a few years later.

After Madame Legros had interviewed in turn all the Princes and Princesses of the Blood—those of the families of Orléans, Condé and Conti—she visited three times the Lieutenant de Police Lenoir, who had succeeded M. de Sartines in his office. Lenoir seemed more sympathetic than his predecessor, but still supported the system. He did not threaten the brave little seamstress, but gave her

no hope, and advised her strongly to give up thus knocking her head against stone walls.

In the year 1783 Queen Marie Antoinette commenced to take the leading part in ruling the State, when she appointed the Baron de Breteuil as her principal Minister. To the Baron promptly proceeded Madame Legros. He received her amiably enough, but declared that it was useless to attempt to shake the opinion of Louis XVI., for M. de Sartines had persuaded him without the slightest doubt that Latude was a dangerous maniac.

By this time that important body, the Académie Française, had become so interested in the courage and devotion of Madame Legros that its members sought to bestow upon her the Crown of Virtue. In order to gain the Queen a little of that popularity of which she stood so greatly in need, Breteuil now persuaded Marie Antoinette that she would be wise to grant her approval of this action. The Queen, therefore, approved, when the prize for virtue was duly bestowed upon the brave little woman, to the applause of thousands. Nevertheless, the unhappy man for whom the crowned matron had fought and struggled so long still remained languishing in his prison!

For another year Madame Legros carried on the fight, pitting her determination against that of the King, the ex-Lieutenant de Police de Sartines, whom he still continued to see, and the Lieutenant de Police Lenoir. By the end of that time she was the conqueror! Madame Legros had, by her persistency, at length beaten down all opposition; she had wearied out the King, probably convinced him that he was in the wrong.

Louis XVI. was defeated by the brave woman, and yielded at length gracefully. He gave the order before the end of 1784 for the release of Latude, when the victim of the vengeance of a King's mistress once more became a free man after over thirty terrible years of imprisonment.

From the time that her unselfish devotion was thus at length crowned with glorious success, history records no more of Madame Legros, one of the most remarkable women of her century in any country.

MADAME DE STAAL (MLLE. DELAUNAY)

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CHAPTER XII

JEANNE DE VALOIS, COMTESSE DE LAMOTTE

In the year 1759 was born, at Bar-Sur-Aube, in the north-east of France, a young lady who, by illegitimate descent, was, with a brother and sister, the last of the Royal race of Valois. Fated to become one of the most disturbing influences of the French Crown, her name was Jeanne de Luz de Saint-Remy. Her father, a poor noble who had nothing left but an old château become little better than a farmhouse, was a descendant of Henri II., a Valois King, and, a young lady of high birth, Nicole de Savigny, Dame de Saint-Remi. This noble, who styled himself at one time Baron de Saint-Remi, at another Baron de Valois, owned papers attested by the Heralds' College acknowledging him as of Royal descent. He was married to a worthless woman, who upon his death migrated to Paris. There she led an immoral life while employing her elder daughter, a very pretty child, to go out in the streets and beg for the household. When Jeanne did not bring home enough money she was flogged. Her mother having abandoned her children to go off with a paramour, the young Jeanne took her younger

sister with her to beg, and frequently excited public interest and compassion by exclaiming: " Have pity upon the last of the Valois! "

While wandering about in this way at Auteuil, on the borders of Paris, a lady whose husband occupied the important position of Provost of Paris had her attention directed to these pretty children. The curé of the parish had informed her that the elder was a remarkable girl, who jealously guarded in her possession papers which proved her descent from King Henri II., a King who had died two hundred years earlier.

This lady took into her house these children of a Royal stock. Her name was Madame de Boulainvilliers, and, not content with taking care of the children, she presented them to Louis XVI. This King of the Bourbon race was not particularly pleased to find that there were any Valois still existing in France. The young husband of Marie Antoinette, however, appointed a small pension for each of the children. Wishing to prevent their marrying and having legitimate offspring to carry on the name of Valois, Louis XVI. directed their protectress to bring up the girls to be nuns. At the same time he imposed celibacy upon the boy, by making him a Knight of Malta, and sent him into the navy.

While being instructed at a neighbouring convent of Longchamps, the girls were still much at the house of their protectress, where, even long before she had attained the age of sixteen, Jeanne had to fear a great danger. M. de Boulainvilliers endeavoured to coerce the young girl, who had become remarkably attractive in her fifteenth year, into be-

coming his mistress. She successfully resisted the advances of the Provost of Paris, and, having in her head ambitious designs, which were to recover the ancient family estates of her great ancestors, determined not to be immured within the walls of a convent. When, therefore, the Abbess endeavoured to carry out the King's views and force Jeanne to take the veil, she ran away, taking her sister with her. Unable to return to the house where she had been persecuted by her host, with her sister, Jeanne de Valois made her way across France to Bar-sur-Aube, her natal place, where they arrived with twelve francs between them. Here a charitable lady took in the sixteen-year-old girl, whom she had known as a child, and her sister, when Jeanne soon found herself exposed to the same dangers as before. The lady's husband was determined to make his innocent guest pay for the bread of charity in a disgraceful way, and this time the unfortunate girl did not escape. When the youthful descendant of Kings was about to become a mother, to cover up the scandal her host married her off to his young nephew, who was at home on leave from his regiment, the King's Bodyguard, at Versailles. In this corps, of which all the members were of noble birth, this nephew, M. de Lamotte by name, was a private *gendarme*. As he called himself Comte, the young lady who had been so badly treated found herself, willy-nilly, the Comtesse de Lamotte upon her marriage to a man for whom she had no love or affinity. Fortunately for the young woman, the twins to which she gave birth one month after her marriage died at once. She was, therefore, left free to pursue all unhampered her ambitious designs. Her appear-

ance is described as having been charming, her conversation lively and gay. To start with, her face declared her one of the Valois, having the very noble and rather long oval of the family. Her expressive blue eyes, under the bow of black eyebrows, shone with a certain spark possessed by this dynasty of poets, from Charles d'Orléans to the divine and *spirituelle* Marguerite d'Angoulême, the sister of François I., who became a Queen of Navarre.

She had, with her pretty teeth, something rallying, mocking in her smile, with, moreover, a touch of the savage in her disposition, engendered by her struggle for existence in childhood upon the streets of Paris.

The husband who had been thrust upon Jeanne being absolutely devoid of fortune, she determined to leave him in the country and start off alone to Paris. There she would make all possible use of her personal attractions and her great name of Valois to interest all kinds of great people in her fortunes, hoping that these would in turn interest the King on her behalf. It so happened that the ancient possessions of the family of Saint-Remi had not long since reverted to the Crown domains. Jeanne hoped, therefore, that there was the better chance of her being able to induce Louis XVI. to confer them upon herself.

Having arrived in Paris and commenced her course of visits, the attractive Comtesse de Lamotte, *de Valois*, found herself with nothing to exist on but her pride, of which she seems to have possessed a considerable share. A young compatriot of hers, a lawyer of the name of Beugnot, from whose records much that is enlightening concerning her career has

been obtained, welcomed her and entertained her at times. This barrister describes how, while literally on the point of starvation, and yet declaring that she was not in the least hungry, the young Comtesse was unable to restrain herself from devouring all of the sweetmeats which he set before her.

Nevertheless, while wearing a perpetually bright smile, Jeanne continued her visits, although in one great dame's drawing-room the poor young lady fell in a faint from sheer hunger.

In these days the greatest ecclesiastic in France was Prince Louis, Cardinal de Rohan, Grand Almoner to the King and Archbishop of Strasburg. With an immense income, although greatly indebted owing to his extravagance, this descendant of the ancient Ducal family which ruled Brittany until the time of Louis XII. was a great fop. Although already about fifty years of age at the time that the Comtesse was first to be found floating round Paris, this Cardinal and Prince of the Empire was a man of most irregular habits. Rohan was, however, not by any means a fool, and during the concluding years of the reign of Louis XV. had proved this fact very effectually by his services in his capacity of Ambassador to the Austrian Court of Maria Theresa, mother of Marie Antoinette, who, by the machinations of Choiseul, had become Dauphine de France in 1770.

The Cardinal then greatly upset the plans of the Empress and her great Minister, Prince Kaunitz, by finding out their secret tricks, which he communicated to Louis XV. He discovered that the Austrian Court, then on friendly terms with that at Versailles, had bought over a clerk in the French

Foreign Office, from whom were obtained many political secrets and the State cypher. Rohan likewise discovered that, not content with this, Maria Theresa and Kaunitz had established all over Europe secret agents, whose business it was to intercept, open, read and copy all French despatches before re-sealing them and forwarding them to their destination. In the pages of Soulavie will be found most interesting details of this most wonderfully-contrived system of *espionnage*, and also of the no less cleverly-arranged system of Versailles to baffle the astute Kaunitz, by paying Austria off in her own coin, and opening the Austrian letters in turn.

When Louis XVI. came to the throne in 1774 it was only upon opening his late grandfather's secret receptacle for papers of importance that he became aware of all that had been going on—became aware also of the fact that his young wife had been sent to Versailles by her mother with strict instructions to become a spy. Although greatly shocked, Louis XVI. was already sufficiently under the influence of his nineteen-year-old spouse to be swayed by her feelings of hatred of his Grand Almoner, who had laid bare her mother's disgraceful insincerity. The result was that upon presenting himself at Court on the occasion of the accession, Prince Louis de Rohan was received by the twenty-year-old Louis XVI. in a manner that was more than rude.

As a result of this disfavour, which he well knew emanated from the young Queen, the Cardinal appeared no more at Versailles save when required so to do upon great occasions in his official capacity of Grand Almoner.

While avoiding the Court, Prince Louis had a

beautiful country place named Saverne; he had also various palaces in Paris. In one of these he had established that celebrated charlatan and necromancer, the *soi-disant* Comte de Cagliostro, an arch-imposter, whose divining powers were believed in by the greatest people from the Queen downwards, even Marie Antoinette being foolish enough to send to consult upon occasion this man thirty years of age who pretended to have been already living in the time of Christ.

It was not, however, so much owing to his belief in the occult powers of the Sicilian humbug as on account of the *beaux-yeux* of the woman whom he had brought with him to Paris, that de Rohan kept Cagliostro in a lordly manner at his expense in a palace which he frequently shared. She was a lovely young creature, with burning black eyes, named Serafina Feliciani, and, owing to the money that the Cardinal squandered upon her with the connivance of the rascally "Comte," Serafina was in the position to entertain as though she were the very Queen of the East that her accomplice pretended.

One young woman, however beautiful, was not sufficient to satisfy a man with the predilections of a Turk, and, as it chanced, Fate threw the Comtesse de Lamotte in the way of Prince Louis de Rohan.

In his capacity as Grand Almoner, this prelate had at his disposal vast sums supposed to be utilised for the aid of noble families in distressed circumstances. Who, therefore, so worthy of aid as one with the Royal blood of Valois in her veins? Upon one or two occasions Jeanne de Lamotte applied to the Cardinal for assistance, and was helped with comparatively small sums of a few thousand livres

at a time. And then he fell violently in love with her, the depth of his passion being abundantly proved by his imploring letters subsequently seen by the barrister Beugnot. Above all, the fancy of the vain-glorious Prince Louis de Rohan was tickled with the idea of owning as his mistress one of a Royal race, whose possession might in a way serve as an offset to his vanity for the neglect and contumely which continued to be shewn him by the reigning couple of united Bourbon and Hapsburg.

For some time the virtue of Jeanne held out against the advances of the Cardinal. But, poverty stricken as she was, and dazzled by his brilliant offers, the Comtesse de Lamotte at length gave herself to him. Then, making use for the purpose of the funds for the relief of the indigent nobility, de Rohan established the young Comtesse in lordly style; she had a fine hôtel, fourteen or fifteen servants, carriages and horses.

She was now in a position to carry on her profession as a Royal beggar to greater advantage, able even to make a respectable appearance at Versailles, where she became acquainted with many noble families. Whether Jeanne actually had any interviews with the Queen is uncertain, but what is certain is that, while befriended upon behalf of Marie Antoinette by some of her ladies, she was received by another Royal Princess. This was the amicable Madame Élizabeth, the sister of Louis XVI. The King's sister-in-law, the Comtesse d'Artois also behaved to Jeanne in a friendly manner.

The better to be in a position to be able to pursue her ardent design of obtaining from the King the grant of her ancestral estates, the Comtesse de

Lamotte now moved her residence from Paris to Versailles, where she established herself.

Towards the latter part of the year 1784 funds ceased to come in quite so freely from the Cardinal; the supply of the money of the poor was running short. Moreover, with his passion satisfied, de Rohan ceased to be so generous as before. His mind was, indeed, but filled with one idea, which was to reconquer the favour of the Queen, and through her to obtain a place in the Ministry—that of Minister of Finance—in place of the inept Marquis de Calonne. This Minister had shown himself to be the enemy of the extravagant Queen, and for long thwarted her in her desire to buy for herself the Palace of Saint-Cloud. Nor did the ideas of the coxcomb Cardinal stop short at becoming a Minister of State. The Queen's reputation was widely known as being light and pleasure-loving, and Prince Louis had the audacity to aspire to become her lover.

What mattered his fifty years! Had not the fifty-year-old Baron de Besenval fallen at the feet of Marie Antoinette and made her an ardent declaration of love? And how had she shewn her resentment? Merely by making of Besenval her best friend!

"If a Besenval, why not a Rohan? one of the proudest families of France, one that had in former times in Brittany treated upon equal terms with the rulers of the Kingdom of France."

So argued the Cardinal, and, in order to continue to earn the sinews of war, the Comtesse de Lamotte, who was now often living under the same roof as Cagliostro and the lovely Serafina, determined to

fall in with his views. She would thus earn his gratitude and his continued pecuniary aid.

In the plot which ensued, the part played by the Comte de Cagliostro seems uncertain. As, however, he was subsequently arrested in connection with the manœuvres of the astute Jeanne, it is necessary to mention that he was suspected of being her accomplice in the matter, which we shall come to presently, of the famous diamond necklace.

Before proceeding further it is, however, necessary for us to state that, it having subsequently been to the interest of all parties to conceal something of what they knew, it has always proved impossible for the unbiassed historian to be able to decide with certitude who was directly responsible for all of the shady transactions the onus of which was thrown upon a friendless young lady. Biassed contemporary chroniclers, such as Madame Campan on behalf of the Queen and the astute Abbé Georgel in the interests of Cardinal de Rohan, have evidently purposely drawn a red herring across the trail. This is proved by the fact of their both placing the cart before the horse, making out the incident of the purchase of the diamond necklace to have occurred in 1784, before the supposed meeting of Marie Antoinette by night with the Cardinal, whereas there was ample evidence left in the annals of the Court which sat for many months to prove conclusively that it did not take place until afterwards, in the year 1785.

The object of both these memoir writers is plain. By a falsification of dates, they have sought to infer that the Comtesse de Lamotte de Valois committed, without accomplices either in the person of the

Queen or the Cardinal, certain actions on account of her poverty, whereas it is evident that she was still in possession of considerable funds until the beginning of the year 1785. Before proceeding with the relation of the various events as a result of which her name was branded as a criminal, it is well to observe that the excessive airs of Jeanne provoked good-natured surprise, even on the part of the Comtesse du Barry. When, long after the favourite of Louis XV. had been released from her imprisonment in a convent, the Comtesse de Lamotte visited her, she presented Madame du Barry with a memorial signed Jeanne de Valois, *de France*. At this the Comtesse du Barry exclaimed, as being a little too much. Jeanne, however, asserted boldly that she had the right to sign herself in that way.

CHAPTER XIII

OLIVA—OR THE QUEEN?

THAT the giddy Marie Antoinette was not above indulging in any vulgar farce was well known; for instance, she was, with some of her laughter-loving companions, guilty of the bad taste of surprising her sister-in-law, the Comtesse d'Artois, in a love intrigue, in order to make sport of her afterwards. Both her femme de chambre, Madame Campan, and the Abbé de Soulavie have put on record her habit of sitting on the benches in the park at Versailles at night, on account of the amusement that it afforded her to be addressed by some of the gallants wandering about at a late hour in search of some amorous adventure. With these the young Queen would enter into conversation. There would, therefore, be nothing surprising in the fact of her indulging in a jest by which the Cardinal de Rohan, whom she hated, might be rendered ridiculous, and a jest of this description was played upon Prince Louis in the summer of the year 1784.

The Comtesse de Lamotte was the agent of the hoax which was practised upon the Grand Almoner, her protector, the protector likewise of her friend, Serafina Feliciani. Jeanne, in order to keep up the

impression of her importance, upon her return from Versailles to the hôtel where Cagliostro was installed, never failed to relate to the Cardinal conversations which she said that she had held with the Queen. In these she said that Marie Antoinette had always shewn a lively desire to be informed concerning him, being especially anxious that de Rohan should be able to clear himself of the suspicion of hating the House of Austria, in order that she might be able to restore him to her favour. Being thus encouraged, Prince Louis did not fear to forward to the Queen a scheme which he had drawn up for the reformation of the State finances, which were in a most deplorable condition, while at the same time begging the Comtesse to inform Marie Antoinette how anxious he was to prove his devotion to her service.

The Cardinal had at this time the more reason to expect some recognition at the Queen's hands, and forgiveness for the past, since he had just aided her brother, the Emperor Joseph II., to raise in Alsace a loan of which he stood very greatly in need in order to prosecute a war with Frederick the Great of Prussia. Rohan was therefore delighted, but not so surprised as he might otherwise have been, when one day the Comtesse de Lamotte handed him a letter, written on gilt-edged paper, which she told him she had received for him from the Queen. In this note Marie Antoinette asked Prince Louis de Rohan to send her a written explanation of his conduct in the past, saying that she was anxious to be able to find excuses for him. He instantly poured out his feelings on paper, and handed his letter to Jeanne to give to the Queen.

Before long he had his reply. Marie Antoinette wrote that his excuses were satisfactory, that she would receive him openly into her favour upon the first opportunity, but, in the meantime, bade him to "be discreet."

That there was cause for discretion Rohan knew well. The young Queen was practically at this time herself guiding the helm of the State, and her principal Minister was the Baron de Breteuil, his deadly enemy. He accordingly replied again to Marie Antoinette, vowing absolute discretion and laying his life at the Queen's feet.

De Rohan now received from the Queen a note saying that, although not yet able to take him openly into her favour, she would accord him a meeting in the Park at Versailles at night between eleven and twelve, when she would give him an opportunity of personally explaining to her anything that he desired. The Comtesse de Lamotte, who was in her confidence, would make all arrangements for this midnight assignation.

Since it was obvious that the Queen could not herself meet at midnight a coxcomb who would fly to the rendezvous with all the ardour of a successful lover, a substitute had to be found to replace her—someone resembling her in appearance.

In order to procure this substitute, the Comtesse de Lamotte was supplied *by somebody* with the large sum of 15,000 livres, but, as transpired later, 11,000 livres of this amount she retained for her own use. The remaining 4,000 livres she gave to the person who represented the Queen.

This was a young lady of the name of d'Essigny, remarkably graceful in appearance, and in face and

carriage very much resembling Marie Antoinette. The artful Jeanne de Valois had seen her frequently sitting under the trees in the gardens of the Palais-Royal, with no other companion than a little boy—almost a baby—who appeared, however, to be without any legitimate father.

Having contrived to pick up an acquaintance with Mademoiselle d'Essigny, Jeanne informed her what was required of her, telling her that should she comply she would greatly please the Queen, who, with her sisters-in-law, the Comtesses de Provence and d'Artois, proposed to conceal themselves in the bushes to enjoy the mystification of the *grand seigneur* who would come to meet her.

This great lord would come to her attired in the uniform of a *mousquetaire* of the Guards, and all that she would have to do would be to give him a rose and a small box containing a portrait of the Queen.

For some reason, and in order to acquaint *somebody*, the Comtesse de Lamotte transformed the Demoiselle d'Essigny into a foreign noblewoman, giving her the title of Baronne d'Oliva. This name of Oliva, it will be noticed, is merely an anagram of the word Valois, without the final "s."

Oliva, who seems to have been a very amiable young woman of good manners, did not accede to the demands of the Comtesse without considerable trepidation.

"What," said she, "am I to do, should this mousquetaire who has come to meet the Queen become too pressing in his attentions? He may consider himself, under the circumstances, as justified in so doing, whereas I, knowing the real Queen to be looking on, should die with shame. I could

never play the part; I should scream and run away."

"Do not fear," replied Jeanne de Valois, "we will interrupt the interview before he can go too far, which he could scarcely do without more encouragement than you, as the Queen, will give him before we intervene. All that you will have to do will be to say the words 'All is forgotten' in a low tone of voice, and to give him your miniature and the rose. Should he even attempt to kiss you, you can easily prevent him by saying that, although the King has, as usual, retired early, Madame de Provence has insisted upon coming for a stroll with you in the Park, and will join you in a moment—indeed, you can say that you hear her footsteps."

After some considerable schooling, Oliva at last consented to enact the part required of her, and late upon a warm summer's night, dressed in a light muslin such as affected by Marie Antoinette, she awaited her gallant in a grove in the Park at Versailles. As the place of rendezvous, to which both Oliva and Prince Louis de Rohan had been conducted previously to avoid error, was within the Park railings, the gate of which had to be opened with a key owing to the lateness of the hour, one of the questions that has never been solved is who supplied these keys of the Royal premises to the Comtesse de Lamotte if it were not the Queen or someone acting on her behalf.

Oliva had not to wait long before she saw the Cardinal approaching—or rather a tall gentleman in uniform. He threw himself on his knees before her, seized her hand and kissed it. In a voice of which the agitation was real, Oliva repeated as nearly as possible the words of her part. She offered him the

rose and the box which she told him contained her miniature, which he pressed to his lips while fervently uttering his thanks to his Queen for her gracious condescension.

The interview had already lasted longer than the supposed Marie Antoinette had intended, when a crackling of bushes was heard. Snatching away her hand from the Cardinal's ardent grasp, Oliva whispered, in an agony of fear: "There are my sisters, Mesdames de Provence and d'Artois! They are looking for me—I must fly! Another time we shall be longer together. Farewell!"

Even as her white skirts were seen rapidly disappearing, the Comtesse de Lamotte, who was cloaked, appeared upon the scene. She told the disappointed lover that the King's two sisters-in-law were close at hand, and that, for the sake of the Queen's reputation, he must instantly retire from the Park.

Thus ended the famous midnight interview, which the Queen's enemies spitefully declared subsequently to have been held with Cardinal de Rohan by no substitute, but by Marie Antoinette herself. As for Prince Louis, with his rose and his miniature of Marie Antoinette, which was beautifully painted, he was in the seventh heaven of delight, while anticipating an early invitation to another nocturnal tryst with the Queen, one in which he hoped for no inconvenient interruption. No such invitation coming, although Marie Antoinette's excuses were received through the Comtesse de Lamotte, he christened an alley in his beautiful gardens the "Allée de la Rose." He had his box with the lovely picture of the Queen mounted in gold, tortoise-shell and

diamonds, and fatuously displayed it to his friends in evidence of his triumph and return to favour. Those friends, who had left him in the lurch while in disgrace, now thronged around the Cardinal, for nothing seemed to them more probable than that he might soon become First Minister, when he would have favours to bestow.

CHAPTER XIV

JEANNE DE VALOIS AND THE DIAMOND NECKLACE

It was in the days of which we write, greatly the fashion for ladies of rank to bestow upon their lovers their portraits painted by some famous artist. Who was the artist by whom was painted the exquisite miniature of Marie Antoinette, attired in white, and holding a rose in her hand, which had been presented to the happy Cardinal apparently as a *gage d'amour?* Who, moreover paid for this charming portrait, for which it would seem that the Queen must have sat in person, and for a particular purpose, since no duplicates of it were known to be in existence? If the Queen did not herself commission an artist to execute the picture, and give it to the Comtesse de Lamotte to be used in furtherance of a jest for the be-littling of the Cardinal, how did Jeanne de Valois ever gain possession of such an excellent portrait of Marie Antoinette in all the beauty of her twenty-eighth year?

There are some enigmas which can never be solved, and under that head must be classed everything having reference to the miniature presented by Oliva to Louis de Rohan in the midnight interview in the bosky grove at Versailles.

While the impatient lover displayed his treasure

to his friends at Saverne, while conducting them along the pathway of the Allée de la Rose, he wondered greatly neither to be summoned to the Ministry, nor to be called by some dainty little note to come and finish in a more satisfactory manner the romantic interview which had been so sadly interrupted.

Notes, however, purporting to be from Marie Antoinette arrived from time to time, and Prince Louis responded to them warmly, the Comtesse de Lamotte being the letter carrier.

At length when, the summer of 1784 being a thing of the past, the Cardinal was passing the winter in his palace at Strasburg, he received a gilt-edged letter begging him to return at once to Paris, "on account of a secret negotiation which," so said the Queen, "concerned her personally." That complaisante Mercury, Jeanne de Valois, would explain the enigma to him upon his return from Alsace.

While, in the hard frosts of the bitter January of 1785, Prince Louis de Rohan is speeding to the capital as fast as the wheels of his coach will bear him, it were well to refer to some events affecting Marie Antoinette, while remarking that one of the absorbing passions of this Princess was for diamonds.

During the last years of King Louis XV., that doting Monarch had ordered for his extravagant favourite Madame du Barry a diamond necklace. Bœhmer and Bassange, the Royal jewellers, were to construct this magnificent gem, of which the price was to be well over a million and a half of livres. In order to get together a sufficient number of stones of the first water, these Court jewellers had recourse

to the great banker Saint James, a friend of Prince Louis, who secretly took a third share in the enterprise.

The death of Louis XV. occurred before the costly diamond necklace was delivered to that saucy kitten du Barry, and, while she was consigned to imprisonment in a convent, the jewellers found themselves left with all the so carefully selected stones upon their hands.

For some years after her accession, Marie Antoinette provided herself from time to time with gorgeous jewellery, in the shape of diamond ornaments, necklaces, bracelets and so on. The Queen was, however, discontented, having been informed that in the matter of diamonds the Queen of England eclipsed her completely, while she herself wished to eclipse all Europe.

Knowing her discontent, which they were careful to foster, the Court jewellers took good care often to talk of their wonderful necklace. They even took it and shewed it to the Queen. As she gazed upon the resplendent gems with a longing eye, Marie Antoinette had ample leisure to observe that it was formed of a band or collar of huge stones, from which were suspended festoons of smaller jewels, which were easily detachable. For the ample charms of the opulent neck of Madame du Barry these festoons would have been more appropriate than for the young Queen, who was fashioned in slighter mould than the last mistress of Louis XV. The large diamonds of the main necklace, as the cunning jewellers took pains to point out, could be easily divided so as to form two splendid bracelets for Marie Antoinette's beautiful arms. After

seeing the necklace, the Queen spoke to her husband of the admiration with which it filled her, and asked him to buy it for her. Louis XVI., however, observed with some little show of impatience that for the price of the jewel he could have two warships, of which, after the recent war with England, he stood greatly in need.

As the King had recently helped her brother Joseph II. with the sum of five million livres, while she had herself just purchased the palace of Saint-Cloud for fifteen millions, Marie Antoinette then acquiesced in the King's remarks to the effect that she had better do without the costly necklace. The jewellers, however, did not give up hopes of selling it to her, and frequently approached the Queen's ladies upon the subject, so that she should have no opportunity of forgetting the existence of the most miraculous necklace ever seen in Europe. It was shortly after Bœhmer and Bassange had conveyed to Marie Antoinette the fact that the necklace would probably be sold to the Queen of Portugal that Cardinal de Rohan received his urgent letter at Strasburg, begging him to come to Paris on account of a secret negotiation which concerned Marie Antoinette personally.

When he unexpectedly arrived in the capital, greatly to the surprise of his secretary the Abbé Georgel and the rest of his ecclesiastical retainers, he lost no time in seeing his *cherè amie*, Jeanne de Valois.

She had much to say to him, and it concerned the necklace. The Queen, who was enceinte, had, said the Comtesse, an irresistible desire to own it, and wished to purchase it unknown to the King. After

her approaching confinement she would have to go in Royal progress to offer thanksgivings for her deliverance, and upon that occasion was particularly anxious to appear in resplendent jewellery.

After these explanations, the Comtesse de Lamotte came to the point, informing Prince Louis de Rohan that, as a mark of her especial favour, the Queen wished him to act as her agent in the matter of the secret purchase of the jewels. The Cardinal was perfectly ready and willing to give the Queen this sign of his attachment; there were, however, difficulties in the way. While the Queen had no ready money to buy the jewels with, nor had he, he was unfortunately in debt to the extent of several millions, notwithstanding his enormous income.

While awaiting developments, Prince Louis, however, saw Bœhmer and Bassange. They had already promised 200,000 livres to the person who should sell the necklace for them, and while the necklace was now offered for 1,400,000 livres instead of 1,600,000, it is probable that the Comtesse de Lamotte and her accomplices in effecting the sale received the balance from the jewellers.

These astute merchants declined, however, to part with their property without seeing a written statement from the Queen that she was prepared to pay for it, through the Cardinal de Rohan, by instalments. Such a paper was soon forthcoming, being an order from the Queen to buy on her behalf. It was dated from the Trianon, and signed Marie Antoinette " de France."

The Abbé Georgel made considerable capital out of this signature later, saying that it was not the usual signature of the Queen, and should therefore

have at once been detected by the Cardinal as a forgery had he not been blinded with passion when he received the order. Georgel, the active partisan of Prince Louis, is, however, writing in a manner calculated to deceive, for surely he must have known that, save to her mother, Marie Antoinette never wrote or even signed her letters herself. Even to crowned heads they were written and signed for her by her " official forger," Dessales by name. There was a very good reason, if the order to Rohan to buy the necklace really emanated from the Austrian Queen, why it should be signed " de France " and not " d'Autriche," or simply with her name of Antoinette, as Georgel sweepingly asserts to have been her custom.

There had at the time of her purchase of Saint-Cloud been some disagreeable opposition made by M. de Calonne, who had represented to Louis XVI. that a purchase made thus by the Queen in her own name would render that palace not French but Austrian property. By signing " de France," therefore, the Queen would signify plainly that the necklace, once bought, would appertain to the French, never to the Austrian Crown—there could be no doubt of the matter.

At all events, the jewellers, who, belonging to the Court would know the Queen's usual method of signature, were quite content with the order which the Cardinal shewed them. He having agreed, on behalf of the Queen, that he would make payments of the amount of 400,000 livres every five or six months—the first payment to be on the first day of August, 1785—received the diamond necklace from Bœhmer and Bassange.

There seems never to have been any doubt of the fact that the precious article was delivered to Prince Louis on the first day of February of that year, and that he took it with him to the Comtesse de Lamotte, where she was living at Versailles, on the same date.

Now comes the point of the whole matter! Jeanne de Valois declared that the main necklace of the large diamonds was on that same day delivered by the Cardinal in her presence to a valet belonging to Marie Antoinette, named Desclaux, who was at her house waiting for the package, which he took at once to his Royal mistress. The small stones were, with the Queen's knowledge, detached and kept by the Comtese de Lamotte. They were to be sold by her and their proceeds to be given to the Cardinal towards paying off the first instalment of the necklace when it fell due.

Although these small stones were actually sold by the Comtesse de Lamotte in Paris, and by her husband in London, and realised the sum of 300,000 livres, which were delivered to Prince Louis de Rohan, all trace of the main diamond necklace disappeared from that date, 1st February, 1785.

While the Queen indignantly denied subsequently that she had ever known anything about their purchase for her by the Cardinal, or had ever received anything from him, no trace of the sale of any of the large stones was ever discovered! When, to save himself, the Cardinal produced two priests, whom the Abbé Georgel declared to be able to prove that the Comtesse had sold the large diamonds in London, their evidence was so palpably false that the whole of the large body of judges of the Parliament disregarded their evidence with derision.

And yet these Magistrates were nearly all in favour of the Cardinal, if simply because of their hatred to the Queen, who accused him of having lied when he said that he had secretly bought such a valuable necklace for her, one moreover which she had already told the King that she would do without.

We must pass over the six months before the first payment was due, merely with the remark that the Cardinal spent the 300,000 livres received from the sale of the small diamonds with his Cagliostro, his Serafina Feliciani, and his mistress of Royal descent, the Comtesse de Lamotte. When payment was demanded on 1st August, no sum of 400,000 livres was forthcoming from either Prince Louis de Rohan or the Queen. The jewellers thereupon went to see Marie Antoinette, whom, as they informed Georgel at Bâle in 1797, they were perfectly assured had received the necklace. She repudiated angrily any knowledge of the affair, when Saint James, the banker, who had been asked by the Cardinal to make the first payment for him, went to the Baron de Breteuil, who at once went to the King, whom he horrified by informing him of what he had learned. Of course, the Cardinal was unaware of the fact that Saint James was secretly a third owner of the necklace.

De Breteuil it was who was responsible for the subsequent scandal, one by which the Queen's name became a byword. He it was who, hating Prince Louis, brought about his arrest, after he had been performing a religious ceremony in his official capacity at Versailles, and who caused the King to have him imprisoned on that same night in the Bastille. The Queen was later furious with de Breteuil for

the publicity with which he had conducted the whole affair.

Thinking to get his accomplice in the matters of writing to the Queen, the assignation in the Park, and the purchase of the necklace safely out of the way before his arrest, Cardinal de Rohan gave the Comtesse funds wherewith to go to Germany. Apparently fearing nothing on her own account, she went instead to her natal place, Bar-sur-Aube, where she openly visited all of her friends in the neighbourhood, including the great Duc de Penthièvre, another descendant of a French King, although not in the legitimate line. While at a fête at the Convent of Clairvaux, news came of the arrest of the Cardinal, when Beugnot, who was also present, advised Jeanne de Valois to fly at once. She declared to Beugnot that she was guilty of nothing, and refused to fly. That night, however, the young lawyer aided the Comtesse de Lamotte to burn all the crazy love letters that she had received from the Cardinal. This was a great mistake, as also, before her departure from Paris, in order to cover up the Cardinal's treasonable love-making, her having destroyed some letters which she held of his addressed to the Queen. A witness appointed by Prince Louis was present when she burned this evidence against him. Subsequently, owing to his knowledge of Jeanne having thus destroyed all of the papers which implicated him, the Cardinal was able to lie about her as freely as he liked. This he did, throwing upon the Comtesse the onus for everything, and declaring her to have stolen the necklace. Jeanne was, meanwhile, arrested and thrown, like the Cardinal, into the Bastille, where,

however, she received very different treatment to the great Prince Louis de Rohan.

There were many months of public and private investigations, during the course of which the King deeply regretted that he had not at once accused the Cardinal of high treason in attempting the Queen's honour, instead of merely being concerned in an affair of a swindling nature.

While the Comtesse de Lamotte, who dreaded the torture, endeavoured in the evidence that she gave to conceal many facts, at the same time sparing from implication both the Queen and the Cardinal, she was spared by none.

The King and the Court would also seem to have shunned the light. Hence the secret proceedings, in which all that was of real importance took place. Hence, moreover, the strange circumstance that no effort was made by the King through his Ambassador in England to verify the accusation made by the Cardinal that the Comtesse de Lamotte had, using her husband as her agent, sold all the large diamonds in London.

Why did not Louis XVI. make this enquiry, which, in order to clear the Queen's honour, was surely essential? To have proved the sale of the stones would have cleared the Queen! Such diamonds, if sold, would, owing to their immense value, have easily been traced. Was the King persuaded by the Queen to make no inquiry? Did the Queen know that the necklace had never left Paris? As it became evident later that the Comtesse was absolutely without funds of any kind, it was plain that she had not sold the big stones, as the Cardinal asserted, and invested the proceeds. She was able

to give the most accurate account of the sale of each of the small stones of the pendants, the proceeds of which had been handed over to the Cardinal—there was not one of them of which she could not mention the purchaser, and the amount paid!

Throughout the trial the greatest Princes and nobles—Condé, Soubise, Guéménée—openly accused the Queen of having received the necklace, while also openly soliciting the numerous *conseillers* of the Parliament who were the judges to white-wash Prince Louis de Rohan. The whole populace of Paris, moreover, in its hatred of Marie Antoinette—" the Austrian "—looked upon the guilty Cardinal in the light of an innocent lamb, a martyr who was being sacrificed by a corrupt Court.

Irritated beyond endurance, the honest Louis XVI. was at length determined to order the charge against him to be changed to one of *lesè majesté*, when Calonne, the Queen's enemy, contrived to prevent this, by secretly hurrying up the judges in making their decision. They declared Prince Louis de Rohan, the Grand Almoner, to be absolutely void of all offence!

The people of Paris then went mad with joy—they surrounded the judges, men and women embraced them, nearly smothered them in their wild frenzy of delight.

The King ordered Rohan, who had been released, to be re-committed to the Bastille, when the masses would have risen in insurrection if the Cardinal had not himself addressed the people—calmed them. Louis XVI. had no other course left than to banish the coxcomb priest who had made love to his wife to one of his distant dioceses. The

whole of Paris thronged round his doors at the moment of departure—when the Cardinal solemnly blessed them from the balcony!

Was there ever seen such a hideous farce? It was, however, a farce that was brought about by the long-continued indiscretions of the Queen with her favourites of both sexes—her boundless extravagance while the people were starving.

The judges were not going to let off the Comtesse so easily. Was she not a Valois?—they would strike at the Bourbon through her!

One morning, at 6 a.m., she was aroused in her cell at the Conciergerie, next door to the Palais de Justice. Told that her lawyer was waiting to see her, she arose from her bed, hastily threw on a dressing-gown. Outside her door she was suddenly seized and bound, then dragged struggling and screaming with rage into the great chamber of the Palais, where all the judges were already assembled.

She was found guilty of robbery, and sentenced—the sentence to be carried out at once in the courtyard of the Palais de Justice, in the presence of the judges and anyone else who might be assembled at that early hour. The judges were evidently afraid to send Jeanne de Valois to the Place de Grève, the usual place of execution, for fear of the sympathy that she might provoke on the way thither.

She was but twenty-six years old, young and beautiful, and, moreover, the scapegoat of the Cardinal, yet this was the horrible sentence which was pronounced by the inhuman Magistrates.

The Comtesse de Lamotte was to be *stripped naked*, to have her hair cut off, to be flogged with a

birch, and to be branded on each shoulder with the letter V, for *Voleuse*—thief!

Fiercely resisting, the unhappy Jeanne was dragged out into the court, where she saw the hot irons being got ready for her branding. So much did she fight, and so savagely did she bite, that those that held her could not remove her scanty attire without tearing it off piece by piece from her delicate body. She continued to scream fiercely against the injustice of her sentence, and to protest her innocence, while struggling to the last. When the red hot brand was brought, owing to her struggles, it slipped in the executioner's hand, slid off her shoulder and burnt deeply into her bosom. While the smell of the sizzling flesh turned the judges sick, she fainted, and while she was in a swoon the other shoulder was branded.

Still in a faint, she was placed in a carriage to be driven off to the awful Salpêtrière, where she was to be *imprisoned for life* among seven thousand harlots and thieves. On the way the almost unclad Comtesse de Lamotte regained consciousness and threw herself instantly out of the window. She fled, but was recaptured and haled off to the Salpêtrière.

In this place she was protected by the horrible women who usually made the life of each newcomer a hell upon earth, for they looked upon her as the victim of the Queen, who they vowed ought to be there in her place.

After fifteen months of imprisonment Jeanne was aided to escape by the nuns who acted as wardresses. She succeeded in reaching England, where she lived for some years by the sale of her memoirs.

Her death, which took place in her thirty-second year, was horrible. Pursued by some ruffians, who vowed that she owed them money, the Comtesse de Lamotte fell from a balcony and broke nearly all her bones. She took, however, three weeks to die. (August, 1791).

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CHAPTER XV

MARIE ANTOINETTE AND HER FAVOURITES

We wonder if it ever occurred to the numberless people who reviled Marie Antoinette as "l'Autrichienne—the Austrian"—that she was really French by descent, of the Blood-Royal in direct succession from Louis XIII., and therefore her husband's cousin. Her grandmother, the Princess Élizabeth Charlotte, was the sister of the Duc d'Orléans, the Regent—she married Leopold, the Duke of Lorraine. The Queen's father, Duke Francis of Lorraine, who was elected Emperor after his marriage to her mother, the Archduchess Maria Theresa of Austria, was a French-speaking man. The language of Lorraine was French, and he was never able to learn German, his wife's native tongue.

The manners and customs of the Court of Lorraine were little better than those of the Regent; its Dukes were a hot-blooded lot, and their morals, including those of the Emperor, those of the barnyard.

Thus Marie Antoinette came to France with an inherited taint of lightness of character in her veins. No wonder, then, that she so easily adapted herself

to the levity of Versailles, where she found the presiding fairy a Madame du Barry and the nobles of either sex rotten to the core, living for nothing but frivolity. Previous to being sent in her fifteenth year to be married to the Dauphin of France, she had received no education in Vienna. It was only when, owing to the intrigues of the Duc de Choiseul, Maria Theresa found that she had the opportunity of making one of her daughters a Queen of France that she suddenly remembered that the Archduchess Marie Antoinette had received no instruction. She was then provided with various masters from whom she was expected to learn everything at once, but she learned nothing. The drawings which were shewn as being by her hand were the work of her instructors.

Meanwhile, among the great ladies of the Austrian Court the young Princess saw strange customs, peculiar friendships with young and handsome women, which she herself would imitate later. The intimate relations of her elder sister Caroline, Queen of Naples, with that low-bred woman, Nelson's Lady Hamilton, was one of these friendships, typical of the love of their own sex displayed by the Archduchesses and Duchesses of Austria, while the curious relations of the Duchesse de Gramont with her Julie must have come forcibly under the notice of the Dauphine as soon as she was a resident at Versailles.

During the few weeks previous to her departure from Vienna, it is true that the Empress Maria Theresa endeavoured personally to impart instruction to her daughter, but it was political instruction. Causing the young Archduchess to sleep in her own

bedroom, the Empress indoctrinated her with the idea that in marrying a French Prince she was doing so for the interests of Austria—that she was never to forget this and that; in all her relations with her husband, these Austrian interests were to remain paramount.

While sending her to Versailles with a Preceptor, the Abbé de Vermond, who was for nineteen years to come, constantly to remind her of these duties and obligations, Maria Theresa impressed upon her daughter the fact that she must seek friends with strong Austrian predilections, such as the Duchesse de Gramont, the return of whose brother, the Duc de Choiseul, to power must be her aim upon the first opportunity. She was, above all, to be guided in everything by the advice of the Comte de Mercy-Argenteau, the Austrian Ambassador. In advance, her husband, the Dauphin Louis, was warned by his astute aunt, Madame Adélaïde, that the Duc de Choiseul, in marrying him in Austria, was introducing an Austrian spy into the Court, and he found ample proof of this for himself upon his accession, when he read the State despatches and private political correspondence of his grandfather, Louis XV. So much ashamed was he then of the conditions of servitude to Austria in which he found himself bound that he took all the papers and hid them upstairs in his workshop under the roof, among his anvils and tools, where he knew that the Queen would never come to see them. For, with his own honest nature, Louis XVI. could not bear that his wife should know to what an extent he had discovered her mother's low trickery in introducing into his bed a young girl who was to report all of

his own intimate actions to Austria, to send in detail to Vienna likewise all the instructions that he gave to his Ministers.

In the beginning, however, Louis XVI. did not share the same apartment with the young Archduchess whom he had so unwillingly been compelled to accept as his spouse. It was not owing to any coldness of disposition on his part, as alleged by the partial Madame Campan, but the physical dislike with which the Dauphin looked upon the young and unformed, if pretty, Austrian girl, whom he had been forced to accept as the result of a Minister's policy. It was, therefore, in vain that the Empress bombarded her daughter with letters repeatedly and indecently urging her to "become enceinte," in order that by giving an heir to France she would be in a stronger position to help Austria. Eventually, by her improving physical attractions and the calculated advances which she made, Marie Antoinette contrived to capture the passionate affection of this young man of a naturally sanguine temperament, but it was years before she was able to give her mother the welcome news for which she anxiously enquired in every letter, to the effect that she was to become a mother.

Although the Dauphine had early complained personally to Louis XV. that her husband insisted upon sleeping apart from her, it was not until 1778, eight years after her marriage, that her first child was born. This was her daughter Marie Thérèse Charlotte, who subsequently married her cousin, the Duc d'Augoulême. Being duly apprised by her daughter of the indifference of the French Prince to the Princess whom he suspected of being a spy,

the Empress immorally urged her daughter to become on terms of intimacy with other Princes of the Blood Royal near to the throne. To this cause may, no doubt, be attributed the fact that her name was so early associated with those young Princes the Duc d'Orléans (afterwards known as Philippe Egalité) and her giddy brother-in-law, the handsome Charles, Comte d'Artois (later Charles X.).

She became in time estranged from the Duc d'Orléans, of whom she foolishly made a deadly enemy, one whom she lost no opportunity of injuring in the public esteem. Her intimacy with the Comte d'Artois, with whom she shared her youthful sports, continued, however, with the result that Marie Antoinette's character suffered severely both before and after she became Queen.

From the Duc d'Orléans, who in his father's lifetime was known as Duc de Chartres, she imbibed an early taste for horse racing, which this wild young man had learned in England in company with his friend the Regent, afterwards George IV. Not being allowed to indulge in horse races at Versailles, Marie Antoinette, however, inaugurated donkey races, in which she rode herself in madcap fashion.

As she was in consequence to be seen at times sprawling in very unbecoming fashion upon the broad of her back, while shrieking with girlish laughter, the unfriendly courtiers, especially the elderly ladies who had had their day, assumed a prudery which was unreal, and loudly expressed their horror of the scandalous behaviour of the young Queen.

From the time of Marie Antoinette's first arrival at Versailles, there was one action by which she

unintentionally fostered the suspicion of her husband and the Court. This was her custom of making a mystery of the letters which she received from her mother, which she would hide under her pillow. Nor would she entrust to anyone the letters which she was sending to the Empress. She would only write these upon the day that the courier was to depart for Vienna from the Austrian Embassy, and then took care to see that they were delivered into the hands of the Comte de Mercy, personally for despatch.

In a day when the opening of sealed letters and their re-sealing in a manner to defy detection was an art much practised at Courts, Marie Antoinette may perhaps have been wise to have acted thus. She would, however, have been wiser, by a greater show of frankness, to have given no cause for the suspicion that she was writing to Austria political secrets inimical to France.

It is from the publication by the Austrian chronicler Arneth of many secret documents, that have been learned the contents of the letters of Maria Theresa. From these it has become evident that while upon certain occasions she lied to her daughter with a view to deceive her, upon others she gave her counsels which were only likely to prove deleterious to the welfare of Marie Antoinette.

An instance of this was to be seen when, finding that Marie Antoinette was making friends of the elderly Princesses, the aunts of Louis XVI., the Empress wrote to warn her against them, thus causing her to seek her associates among the younger and more giddy members of the Court. After her arrival at Versailles, Marie Antoinette was supposed

to continue her education by the instruction of the Abbé de Vermond. She did, however, nothing of the kind, and finding that she was making of this priest merely a confidential adviser, Louis XVI. took a dislike to him from the first. So much was this the case, that the King is said only to have spoken once to his wife's Preceptor in nineteen years—and then rudely.

It was very shortly before she had become Queen that Marie Antoinette first made a friend of the Princesse de Lamballe, a charming and attractively pretty young lady, whom she moulded to her will by the lover-like caresses which she showered upon her.

The sprightly Princesse, who was *née* de Savoie-Carignano, was the widow of the young Prince de Lamballe, the son of the Duc de Penthièvre, who was a descendant of Henri IV. and *la charmante* Gabrielle d'Estrées.

The sister of her husband, the Prince de Lamballe was Louise Marie, an exceedingly handsome and amiable young lady, who married the Duc Philippe d'Orléans (Égalité). With his Madame de Genlis, Madame de Buffon, and hundreds of other less conspicuous ladies, he made her life perfectly miserable, and the Prince de Lamballe was the companion of his riotous existence.

Ill-natured gossip against the Duc d'Orléans said that this Prince purposely led young Lamballe into a life of debauchery in order that he might die of his excesses, when his sister the Duchesse d'Orléans would remain sole heiress to the very rich Duc de Penthièvre. Whether the backbiters of the Duc d'Orléans lied or no, the Prince de Lamballe died

very early, leaving as his widow one who, although a little older, looked even younger than the nineteen-year-old Queen.

Marie Antoinette had seen the Princesse occasionally while she was still Dauphine, but it was not until the early part of the year of her accession that she fell in love with "la Lamballe." It was when she first beheld her darting through the snow in a sleigh, with her pretty baby face peeping out from a mass of furs, that the Austrian Princess conceived a sudden passion for her *mignonne*, while vowing that she had never yet in France set eyes upon such a delicious little person as the child-like widow.

Marie Antoinette at once sought her out, and from that moment commenced an intimate connection, one which was looked upon as scandalous in the Queen, and was certainly injurious to the object of the Queen's ardent attachment. While with Marie Antoinette the heat of this strange passion cooled when it was replaced by another, it eventually cost the poor little Lamballe her life. For when the Comtesse de Polignac, who had supplanted her in the Queen's love, deserted Marie Antoinette, the Princesse de Lamballe returned from a place of safety abroad to comfort the Queen and share her danger, with results that were fatal to herself.

No sooner had Marie Antoinette ascended the throne with Louis XVI. than she commenced a life of wild extravagance, giving away places to which huge incomes were attached to those of either sex of whom she made her favourites. For the benefit of the Princesse de Lamballe she contrived to revive an old and disused office. It was one of great

official importance—that of *Surintendante* of the Queen's Household, and in connection with it was a very large yearly income.

While the sweet girl whom Marie Antoinette had selected for her inseparable companion was undoubtedly exceedingly pretty, the appearance of the Queen herself was daily improving at this period of her early womanhood. When she had first come to Versailles she was nothing more than an unfledged girl. She was neither a brunette nor a blonde, but what the French called *une rousse*, from the then ruddy tint of her hair and the high colouring of her cheeks. On account of the warmth of temperament which hair of this shade was supposed to betoken, any rousse coming to Versailles as the bride of a Dauphin was always looked upon with suspicion. So much was this the case, that when the first wife of the Dauphin, the father of Louis XVI., came from Spain, that young Infanta deemed it prudent to tint her hair, which was of the objectionable hue.

Those who looked upon Marie Antoinette with suspicion upon her arrival from Austria on account of her ruddy tones did not fail to point out this defect to her young husband, who was then quite ready to be displeased. Not so, however, his grandfather, Louis XV., who vowed that he found the young Dauphine adorable, and was inclined to make much more of the Archduchess, who might, as has been related, have been his own wife, than was quite agreeable to Madame du Barry, for whose sake he had refused her hand. La du Barry was, however, one of those given to making sly jests upon the subject of the warmth of colouring of the youthful

Princess, which remarks, being no doubt repeated, helped to inspire Marie Antoinette to procure the imprisonment of the saucy favourite as soon as it was in her power to do so.

Fortunately for the Princess, the shade of her hair turned gradually to brown, while in a year or two her figure, which had been lanky at the awkward age, became symmetrically developed. Inclined to be tall, from an early age she loved to bedeck her graceful head with tall and waving ostrich plumes, which were very becoming to her style of beauty, while her arms and hands were beautifully formed. With a nose that was aquiline but not ungraceful, Marie Antoinette's face suffered, however, somewhat from the defect of a too pronounced and sensuous under lip. With fine eyes, an ivory skin and a good carriage, even before she had entered upon her twentieth year the daughter of Maria Theresa was distinctly good to look upon.

So thought others at the Court besides the Comte d'Artois, nor, coquette that she was by nature, was the Queen disposed to resent adoration from the male sex. We think that we may, however, be justified in boldly answering in the negative the question so bluntly posed by a French writer: "Had Marie Antoinette lovers before she became Queen?"

Later, however—putting aside the subsequent case of the devoted Count Fersen, whose love she returned—it would be impossible to deny that she very soon allowed herself what may be perhaps best described by the word "distractions." The first of these was the handsome young Duc de Lauzun, a man of the highest fashion. A gentleman and

vrai galant homme, Lauzun always denied emphatically that there was anything between him and the Queen. Her conduct with Lauzun, however, nearly drove wild with jealous rage another of her admirers, the Duc de Coigny, a man who presumed later to make a terrible scene with and browbeat the King because some of the immense emoluments that he derived from the Queen's favour had, perforce, to be reduced.

For the brilliant Duc de Lauzun, who became later Duc de Biron, Marie Antoinette could not display enough interest. To such an extent went her admiration that, wishing him to cut even a finer figure at the Court, she wrote to her mother, the Empress, to send to Versailles a magnificent Hungarian Corps-de-Garde, of which Lauzun was to be given the command.

Her crowning act of folly in his connection was when Marie Antoinette sent the Princesse de Guéménée to Lauzun to ask him to give her a splendid heron crest which he wore as a plume. When she had received this from the Duc, who had gladly sent it, the Queen adorned herself with the well-known aigrette and appeared with it in public.

The Queen's growing intimacy with the Princesse de Lamballe would appear to have thrown the attractions of the agreeable Lauzun somewhat into the background. At all events they served to divert the course of current scandal, notwithstanding which seeming neglect both he and his furious rival, the Duc de Coigny, appear to have continued to flourish about the Court. Lauzun, we may mention, was one of the Queen's friends fated to lose

his head upon the guillotine during the Reign of Terror in 1793.

Another of the Queen's early favourites was the Captain of the King's Guards, the Chevalier de Luxembourg. A terrible scandal was created, one which made the Empress furious, when, upon marrying off Luxembourg to a rich and very noble widow, the Queen insisted, in spite of the remonstrances of the Finance Minister Turgot, upon the King endowing her favourite with an immense sum of money.

CHAPTER XVI

MARIE ANTOINETTE AND HER AMUSEMENTS

WHILE that handsome, young, and essentially French Prince, the Comte d'Artois, was credited by *noblesse* and people alike with possessing so little morality and honour as to be capable of seducing his sister-in-law, his elder brother held aloof. This was the Comte de Provence, known by the title of Monsieur, which was always applied to the son of France who stood next to the Monarch in the succession.

Monsieur, who twenty-five years after the Revolution succeeded to the Crown as Louis XVIII., was a well-instructed Prince with a prodigious memory. Although absolutely devoid of the strong moral principles which marked the honest Louis XVI., he did not imitate his brother d'Artois and run after Marie Antoinette. Scarcely, indeed, would he ever join in her amusements. While the Queen was devoted to amateur theatricals, in which she liked for choice to figure in some rôle of a pretty soubrette, while d'Artois played the giddy lover, the Comte de Provence would merely form a supercilious member of the audience. Both of these Princes were married, and, as Monsieur was the heir to the throne

during the long period that Marie Antoinette remained childless, she and her brother-in-law de Provence always observed each other with a certain amount of jealousy.

The wives of Monsieur and d'Artois were sisters, the young daughters of Victor Amadeus III., Duke of Savoy and King of Sardinia. Marie Joséphine, the elder, who married Monsieur, was a Princess of considerable intelligence, and full of life and gaiety. While her moral character gave nothing to complain of, she was addicted too much to the bottle, drinking a great deal of wine, possibly to console herself for her husband's infidelities with Madame de Polastron, a woman of no principles, and Madame du Cayla, one who affected ostentatious piety. Marie Théresè de Savoie, the spouse of d'Artois, was a very small woman, excessively lively, whose life was made up of a succession of amours. She bore two legitimate sons to the Comte d'Artois, Louis Antoine, Duc d'Augoulême, and Charles Ferdinand, Duc de Berry.

After the birth of these Princes, her escapades with half of the members of the Royal Bodyguard became notorious. Notwithstanding the fact that Marie Antoinette, with some of her giddy crew, was so malicious as to surprise her sister-in-law in one of her amorous adventures, the Comtesse d'Artois was not to be deterred from her courses, for her heart was brimming over with affection for the male sex.

Thus the little lady loved with a frequency worthy of the notorious Madame de Staël. However, unlike that excessively vain woman, she did not shout her woes aloud to the world each time that

she had wearied out one of her lovers, but allowed him to go his way in peace and quietly took another.

This warm-hearted Princess had two daughters of uncertain parentage, who were disowned by the Comte d'Artois. She remained, however, at the Court upon very intimate terms with the Queen, in whose amusements she shared. It is not to be surprised, however, if the people at large cried out at the immoralities of this passionate Princess, who had a large admixture of Bourbon blood in her veins. In fact, the libertine conduct of the Princes and Princesses of the Court was far too glaring to be offset in the public mind by the immaculate honesty and morality of the King. The loose tone which prevailed in the circle surrounding the Queen became early only too well known. Coming, as it did, as a sequence to the outrageous vice of Louis XV., the glaring immorality of Louis XIV. and the Regent d'Orléans, it may be looked upon as one of the final causes that hurried France along to the throes of the Revolution, which, for a time, swept the immoral race of Bourbon from France and the throne.

The habits of Marie Antoinette were greatly at variance with those of the King. While Louis would pass all of his day in hunting or shooting, and return wearied, and only anxious to go to bed early, the Queen's diversions lasted until the early hours of the morning. Nightly, with a few of her associates, she would be out late visiting those who were her intimate friends, and all of her diversions were not sought at Versailles. In the season of the extremely lax Opera balls in Paris, Marie Antoinette would proceed to these in mask and domino, and enjoy her-

self talking to total strangers, whom she was supposed to mystify as to her identity. Upon at least one of these occasions the Queen was known after the ball to have indulged in a lively and prolonged conversation with an unknown gentleman in the street, and further to have shocked Versailles by returning from her festivity in an ordinary fiacre or cab.

So irritated did the King become at the racket made by his lively Queen and her companions upon their return at two or three in the morning that he attempted to prevent her nocturnal racketings. Marie Antoinette, disregarding the marital admonitions, was treated upon one occasion to a disagreeable surprise.

Returning one cold night to the palace at Versailles in the small hours, the Queen found herself locked out. Louis had caused the gates of the iron railings to be locked and the keys removed from the guard house, with the result that even had the officer of the guard been willing to disobey his instructions upon the Queen's pleadings, he was unable to admit her. It was only after Marie Antoinette had been left for long outside shivering, and the King had been aroused from his heavy slumbers, that the key of the gate was produced.

A great gambler, when the Court was at Marly the Queen presided in a large and domed saloon where the gambling was carried on, she herself being seated at the head of the principal table. While ladies who had not been presented were only allowed to view from a high gallery the magnificently-dressed assemblage of the Court, this restriction did not apply to those of the opposite sex. Thus any

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gentleman who had been introduced by a friend at the Court was at liberty, whether he had been presented or no, to back the hands of the ladies gambling at the Queen's table. He might participate in the game by standing behind some Duchesse or Marquise and laying his stake on the table in front of her. As cheating was unfortunately only too prevalent among the *grandes dames* at Marly, the Queen caused a white ribbon to be fixed upon her table at a distance from the edge, and ruled that no stake was actually made that was not placed beyond this white line.

When at Marly the members of the Queen's Court were always expected to be *en grande tenue*, there being an extravagant mode of dress expressly laid down for this country place which differed from that worn at Versailles. In imitation of Marie Antoinette, the ladies were attired in a gorgeous gown gathered in at the back, with large hoops.

Their heads were adorned with huge feathers, their faces bore a liberal application of rouge, while their persons were ornamented with diamonds and other brilliant gems in profusion. Dressed up in this style, it was customary after dinner, and before the gambling began, for the Queen, the Princesses (Mesdames de Provence and d'Artois), and the noble ladies to take an airing.

Seating themselves in little carriages drawn by men, they promenaded about under the beautiful trees in the park, while the gallants paced alongside and entertained them with the last scandal of the day.

Very large sums of money were lost and won at Marly, and the King frequently joined in the

gambling, playing at faro or lansquenet. Louis XVI. was, however, by no means a plunger, and, although he won or lost a fair amount of money, always expressed his displeasure when he heard of really great sums being staked or any person being ruined by wild recklessness at play.

The stay of the Court at Marly only lasted for a short time during the summer, but Marie Antoinette had another place of residence which, even before her purchase of Saint-Cloud, was all her own, and where she could enjoy herself as she liked in her own fashion without being troubled by etiquette. This was the Château du Petit Trianon in the great park at Versailles, with which her husband had presented her. To this place the Queen frequently proceeded alone from the palace, being merely followed across the park by one valet, and there she would take up her residence. While no gentlemen of the Chamber or ladies of honour were allowed to follow her, the Queen maintained a *concierge* and his wife and a small staff of servants at the Trianon. These domestics, as also those at her palace of Saint-Cloud, wore her own liveries, which differed from those of the King. While she slept in a large four-post bed with faded hangings, which had last been occupied by the saucy Madame du Barry, whom she had punished by imprisonment, the young Queen in no way renovated the furniture of the château. This remained as it had been when Louis XV. had been accustomed to occasionally occupy the Petit Trianon with his extravagant favourite.

To the Trianon Marie Antoinette allowed none to come but her intimate friends, and although the King might visit her there, he could not remain with-

out a special invitation, which was very rarely given —it was her private home, and as such she maintained it. Delighting in the gardens of the Trianon, it was there also that she frequently got up the theatricals in which the scapegrace d'Artois took such a leading part, in which the Queen herself also delighted to perform. Although but an indifferent actress, Marie Antoinette looked very well in the parts of the saucy chambermaid which she so affected, but there were many of those who saw her thus travestied who did not neglect to complain that it was very undignified for a Queen to allow herself to be seen dressed as a milkmaid, milliner or kitchen wench. The greatest enemies of Marie Antoinette were, indeed, frequently to be found among nobles of both sexes who had profited by her favours. Out of jealousy for those in the Queen's particular set who received more than themselves, they spread stories to her discredit. Thus such an instance as her having upon one occasion good-humouredly called in a soldier of the guard, to see her when dressed up in one of her soubrette parts, was made the most of, as an example of the Queen's unbecoming familiarity with those beneath her.

Among the favourites upon whom Marie Antoinette bestowed her greatest favours, and immense sums of money, was the Comtesse Jules de Polignac, with whom she fell in love after the fashion in which she had conceived a passion for the Princesse de Lamballe.

Attired simply in a white gown, a gauze kerchief and a straw hat—a costume very unlike that of Marly—the Queen would pass a great deal of her time in the gardens and shrubberies of the Trianon

with this friend, and with the friends of this friend, all of whom the Queen accepted at her bidding, including her lover, the Comte de Vaudreuil.

The Comtesse Jules was a pretty little woman with large langorous eyes, who attracted Marie Antoinette as violently as though she had cast a spell over her. Very soon her affection for this favourite far exceeded in warmth that which she had displayed for Marie Thérèse de Lamballe, when the little woman, who was naturally indolent, and slow-witted, commenced to intrigue, being pushed by the gang behind her. This gang consisted of la Polignac's husband, his sister the Comtesse Diane de Polignac, who was a perfect shark, and the despotic lover, the Comte de Vaudreuil. They had numerous friends and connections behind them, and for all the purse strings of the State were untied by Marie Antoinette, through her power over the weak Louis XVI. He was unable to withstand his wife's urgent demands, no matter how impoverished the country might be, and thus gave very largely to her favourites.

Soon the Polignac party were found appointing Ministers of their own selection—they told the Comtesse Jules to insist to the Queen that such a person would have to be made Secretary of State for War, or of Finance, or that she herself would, with regret, be compelled to retire from Versailles. Thereupon the appointment was made. In this manner was the forger of Parliamentary papers at Rennes, M. de Calonne, in September 1783, made Minister of Finance through the Queen's influence, when he shewed more than ingratitude to Marie Antoinette and thwarted her desires upon every possible occa-

sion. In the year 1781 the Comtesse de Polignac made two Ministers—those of Marine and War. To shew how little the Queen knew of the men whom she had asked the King to accept, she ran gleefully to her beloved favourite, to tell her that she had done as she had asked, that the nomination was signed—M. de Puységur was Minister of War.

"M. de *Puy*ségur!" replied the Comtesse, astonished, "it was for the Marquis de Ségur that I asked for the appointment!"

The man who was the leader of the gang that drove the Queen into committing such acts of folly was also its bully, the Comte de Vaudreuil. The historian Michelet humorously compares this brutal, overbearing lover of the favourite of Marie Antoinette to a slave owner. He says: "Of this planter the nigger was la Polignac, of whom the nigger was the Queen, of whom the nigger was the King."

As, in addition to a provision for those behind her, a fine position had to be provided for the Comtesse herself, the Queen made her one. The Princesse de Guéménée was the "Gouvernante des Enfans de France." When her husband, who owed no less than thirty millions of livres, was declared bankrupt, Marie Antoinette put it to the Princesse that it would be only becoming in her to resign her largely-paid and important place at the Court. The Princess de Guéménée retired accordingly, when the little Comtesse was given her post, over the heads of several other ladies of high rank who had far better claims to such an important position. Not long after this the Comtesse Jules was transformed into the Duchesse de Polignac.

Notwithstanding the fact that " the slave owner " was once so violent to " the nigger " whom " his nigger " bullied as in a rage to break the Queen's ivory billiard cue, if we would believe Sir Nathaniel Wraxall, Marie Antoinette did far more than merely support the presence of the violent Vaudreuil. In his " Posthumous Memoirs," when speaking of the Queen, we find the following statements.

" Even the Comte d'Artois was emunerated among her lovers by Parisian malignity; an accusation founded on his personal graces, his dissolute manners, and his state of separation as well as of alienation from his wife."

" The hatred of the populace towards the Queen became naturally inflamed by this supposed mixture of a species of incest with matrimonial infidelity, and it was to the base passions of the multitude that such atrocious fabrications were addressed by her enemies. If Marie Antoinette ever violated her nuptial vow, either Count Fersen or Monsieur de Vaudreuil were the favoured individuals."

Further on, after telling us that the Queen delighted in Vaudreuil's society, Wraxall describes strange games in which the Queen took part, and which apparently degenerated into licence. One such, which took place in a thickly-wooded part of the park at Versailles, was called " Descamativos." It seems to have been one of mock marriages, binding for an hour only. Around an altar erected of turf in a glade in the woods, there gathered some forty couples of gentlemen and ladies of the Court. Behind the altar stood a high priest, who was usually the Comte de Vaudreuil. This high priest went through a mock marriage ceremony,

uniting the gentlemen to such of the ladies to whom they seemed to be on pretty familiar terms. Himself de Vaudreuil usually united to Marie Antoinette. Part of the ceremony consisted in a vow on the part of the married couples faithfully to re-assemble around the altar after the space of one hour, when their marriages would be dissolved.

The marriage service being over, all of the brides and bridegrooms stood in a circle with their backs to the altar, waiting for the magic word which gave them permission to start for their respective honeymoons.

" Descampativos! " the word was pronounced, when off scampered the newly-married couples as hard as they could in different directions, to seek the leafy recesses of the woods!

When such was a specimen of the amusements indulged in by the young Queen of France, is it any wonder if the people considered the morals of Marie Antoinette as light as her manners were frivolous?

CHAPTER XVII

MARIE ANTOINETTE AND COUNT FERSEN

When, in the year 1789, the Revolution broke over the heads of Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette, numbers of the nobles left France, while many more shewed their devotion to the Monarchy by remaining to face the storm. Among those who were the first to desert the Queen and to swell the tide of emigration were the Duchesse de Polignac, her husband, his sister the Comtesse Diane, and M. de Vaudreuil.

Previously they had considerably distressed Marie Antoinette by assembling in their gatherings people to meet her whom she found most distasteful. When the Queen objected, Madame de Polignac replied, rudely, "I do not think, because your Majesty does me the honour to visit my salon, that you have a right to exclude my friends from it."

To avoid the promiscuous society into which she was thrown by her favourite, Marie Antoinette commenced to pass her evenings more frequently in the apartments of her Lady in Waiting, the Comtesse d'Ossun. Thereupon, in jealous rage, the whole circle of the Polignacs commenced bitterly to calumniate the Queen, who had endowed them with

pensions and unduly squandered upon them the money of the State. In particular, they took away the character of Marie Antoinette in connection with Lord Strathraven, a young Scotch noble with whom she occasionally danced in the *réunions* of the Comtesse d'Ossun.

While thus deserted so cruelly by those who only sought to save their own skins in the moment of danger, Marie Antoinette found two friends who really loved her, and who proved themselves willing to risk their lives in her service. The first of these was a woman, the Princesse de Lamballe, who returned to the Court when her rival fled, only to be foully butchered by the mob in the September massacres of 1792. We will not here dwell upon the horrors accompanying the cold-blooded murder of this sweet lady, the indignities to which her poor body was subjected, the carrying of its remains in bloody fragments to be held up to the prison window in The Temple of the Queen who had loved her in happier days. We have described in full detail the September massacres elsewhere (see "Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette"), and it is sufficient here to mention how the unhappy Princesse de Lamballe came by her terrible end.

The other person who remained in France to share the Queen's dangers, when he could easily have gone away to avoid them, was Count Jan Axel Fersen, a Swedish noble of Scotch descent. Fersen held a military post under the French Crown, being the Colonel Proprietor of the Royal Regiment of Swedes, and his emoluments cost the State the sum of one hundred and fifty thousand livres yearly. He

was a man of very distinguished bearing and handsome features, and, being a foreigner, the Queen in the earlier part of her reign commenced to flirt with him, as she did with other handsome foreigners, especially if they were tall men. In this way she looked with a very kindly eye for a time upon Lord Hugh Seymour, the Earl of Dorset, and Earl Whitworth.

The flattering attention bestowed upon the young Swedish noble by Marie Antoinette did not have the result of causing him to become vain or overbearing like the Duc de Coigny or the Chevalier de Luxembourg; it simply had for effect the result of causing him to fall passionately in love. While seeking no increase of pensions or offices, no millions of livres from the State treasury, Count Fersen loved the Queen wholeheartedly in secret, his passion only being perceived by the woman who had, at first from sheer coquetry, fanned it into flame.

Marie Antoinette before long perceived that she had herself been carried away by her feelings further than she had intended. Owing to the dangers she ran of being swept beyond the bounds of prudence, she told Fersen that he must leave her, for her tranquillity's sake so much as for his own.

It was at the time that the Marquis de La Fayette and other French nobles had just gone to America as volunteers to aid the insurgent colonists in their rebellion against George III. of England, that the Queen and Fersen first found that their hearts were so drawn towards each other. French ships and French soldiers were to follow the volunteers, to take an active part in the war against England.

Stifling his feelings, which cried loudly to him to remain, Axel Fersen tore himself from the Royal lady of his love, obeyed her behest to leave her side, and likewise went off to the wars in America.

There he remained for two years, but so deep was his devotion that during the whole period of his absence Marie Antoinette was never for one moment absent from his thoughts.

When he returned, the young Queen perceived only too plainly the ravages which love had wrought upon his features, for he had aged ten years during his absence. The pity of the woman was aroused, her heart was touched. She no longer attempted to conceal from Count Fersen that she too had thought of him constantly, longed for his return. In a word, it became evident to a few that, very shortly after his return from America, Marie Antoinette gave to Count Fersen the last proofs of her love and yielded to the passion which she had conceived for him.

The liaison, however, was accompanied by no flourish of trumpets. Axel was as modest and prudent as he was devoted, as determined to preserve the honour of the Queen who loved him as he subsequently proved ready to risk his life on her behalf. So secretly was their love affair carried on, such precautions taken over their stolen meetings, that to the world at large, even to the lynx-eyed and jealous courtiers at Versailles, the connection between the handsome Swedish colonel and the Queen appeared as nothing unusual. The Lauzuns, Luxembourgs and Coignys, all those in connection with whom the Queen's name was so

freely bandied about, had not the slightest idea that the heart of the Austrian Archduchess had been far more deeply touched by a modest Swedish gentleman than it had ever been by any swashbuckling French noble. Of real love it is probable that they did not even believe the Queen to be capable. She might, of course, in a frivolous, light-hearted way, indulge herself in an occasional *amourette*—nothing more.

Those who thought about the subject at all, and thought thus, were, however, entirely mistaken. For once the Queen had judged correctly; she had made a good choice, and recognised the nobility of character of the man whom she had chosen. Her depth of love for Fersen, therefore, did not change any more than did his for Marie Antoinette—their mutual affection stood the test of years during which Fersen lived only for the Queen. We are told by a contemporary that "the Count's life was arranged with the express purpose of compromising her as little as possible." Thus, though the connection may have been suspected, owing to this gallant lover's circumspection it never became a subject of scandal.

After the earlier stages of the French Revolution, when the King and Queen had been carried triumphantly by the people from Versailles to Paris, they were installed in the palace of the Tuileries. With the formerly autocratic power of the Kings of France completely shattered, there for a year or two Louis XVI. reigned as a Constitutional Monarch.

Notwithstanding that he did all in his power to

meet his rebellious people half-way in their reforms, and that he himself continued for a long time to be popular with the majority, the miserable state of the finances, which the people attributed chiefly to the extravagance of the Queen, resulted in the increasing violence of the people. Above all, Marie Antoinette, whom they called " Madame Déficit," was hated, and so long as she remained present with the King they were not willing to give him a fair chance to rule the Kingdom even upon the Constitutional lines which they themselves had designed.

The great mistake of Louis XVI., one for which the Queen was no doubt herself greatly to blame, lay in his not sending Marie Antoinette away from him to her relatives in Austria, at all events for a time until matters had quieted down.

He would then have been given an opportunity to set matters right, in doing which the King would have been greatly aided by his personal popularity and known honesty of purpose.

Failing to take this step at the beginning of the Revolution, very soon it became too late. The people became more than ever incensed with the Queen owing to the fact that Austria and Prussia were rising in arms against France, while thousands of *emigré* French nobles were, under the Prince de Condé, forming an army at Coblentz wherewith to aid an Austrian invasion.

It thus happened that no sooner were the King and Queen installed in the Tuileries than they found themselves practically prisoners in Paris. It was only with difficulty that during the heat of the summer of 1790 they were allowed to proceed to the

Queen's country palace of Saint-Cloud. From this place it would not have been difficult for the whole Royal family to effect their escape to join the loyal Marquis de Bouillé, who at that time commanded an army at Metz, on the frontier. Once with Bouillé, they would have been safe, and able perhaps to dictate terms to the revolutionists. From that place they could, moreover, with ease have been able to gain Austrian territory.

Although Marie Antoinette urged this escape, the wooden-headed Louis XVI. proved obstinate to a degree. As upon previous occasions, when many nobles had banded themselves together to effect his rescue from Paris, he refused to leave or, indeed, to be helped in any way. As an excuse to his wife for refusing to fly, he quoted the instances of Charles I. and James II. of England. The former of these, said the King, had lost his head because he made war upon his people, while the latter had lost his Crown owing to his mistake in taking refuge in a foreign country. Neither of these courses, declared Louis, would he take.

Owing to his obstinacy, the Royal family returned from Saint-Cloud to Paris, and the chance of escape was lost, and this notwithstanding that Marie Antoinette had pointed out the fallacy of the King's arguments. She had urged that although they might join Bouillé, whose troops were chiefly composed of foreign regiments, and thus not imbued with the French revolutionary ideas, the King need not wage war upon his subjects. Neither need he, unless he so chose, seek refuge upon foreign soil.

After, owing to his folly in refusing to listen to his wife, the King found himself back again with her at the Tuileries, matters went from bad to worse, and their position became daily less secure. Affairs culminated after the celebrated "Day of Poignards," the 28th of February, 1791. Upon that date the National Guard, a revolutionary force raised from the citizens of Paris, made an onslaught upon a large number of loyal nobles who had assembled at the Tuileries. For the protection of the King and Queen, all of these nobles had daggers or other weapons concealed beneath their clothing. The unfortunate gentlemen were disarmed, severely beaten, hurled downstairs and flung violently out of the palace.

The Queen's brother, the Emperor Leopold II., who had succeeded Joseph II., now sent word that he would assemble an Austrian army on the Belgian frontier near that of Bouillé, and would thus be in a position to give aid should the Royal family but contrive to escape from Paris and join the French General. The King's scruples about taking flight were now overruled, and from that moment the Queen's devoted lover, Count Fersen, commenced concerting measures with Bouillé, in order to make that flight successful to Montmédy on the eastern frontiers of France.

Arrangements were made by Fersen and an engineer officer named de Goguelat whereby upon an appointed date small parties of Bouillé's mounted troops were to be waiting in readiness at various points on the road beyond the town of Châlons. To the first post beyond Châlons the fugitive Royal family would be compelled to drive in a coach un-

escorted, trusting to their disguises alone to get through so far in safety.

This coach was provided by Axel Fersen. It was a huge yellow travelling carriage known as a *berline*, which he had constructed on purpose for the flight, and to be drawn by six horses. In this berline, which Fersen would order to be taken by his German coachman to station in readiness outside the barrier gates of Paris, there would travel six persons. These were Louis XVI., Marie Antoinette, Madame Élizabeth, the King's young sister, the young Dauphin dressed up as a girl, his sister, the Princesse Marie Thérèse, and a very capable military officer in the confidence of Bouillé, Baron de Viomesnil.

Three gentlemen of the Bodyguard, attired as couriers in a yellow livery, were to ride outside the coach. In order to gain this vehicle, it would be necessary for the King first to hold his nightly ceremony known as his *coucher*, then for him and the Queen to go to bed as usual, to get up again, disguise themselves, walk out of the palace by different doors and find a certain *carrosse de remise* or cab, which would be waiting for them at an appointed spot near the Tuileries. The Queen was to travel as a Russian lady, the Baronne de Korff, for whom and her suite the ever-active Fersen had contrived to obtain passports, a very difficult matter in those days of universal suspicion. The King was to travel under the pseudonym of M. Durand, the steward of the Russian Baroness.

It is not to be supposed that the vigilant Fersen was going to trust his dearly-beloved Marie Antoinette to any ordinary cabdriver, who might

recognise and denounce her, when she would run the risk of being torn to pieces by the people in the streets. Far from it! the Swedish Colonel would himself act as cabdriver, and if only the Royal party should gain in safety his *carrosse de remise* drive them to the suburb of Bondy, where the yellow berline would be found.

At the last minute before the escape an unfortunate incident occurred. After the Duchesse de Polignac had deserted the Queen, a certain Baronne de Tourzel had succeeded her in her duties as Governess of the Children of France. Finding that the Queen was on the point of escaping with her children, this woman obstinately refused to be separated from her Royal charges. The result was that the Baron de Viomesnil, who would have been of the greatest assistance later, had to be left behind while the foolish Madame de Tourzel took his place. It was also now arranged that this lady was to personate the Baronne de Korff, while the Queen and Madame Élizabeth would figure as her attendants.

Axel Fersen had to undergo a weary and anxious time while waiting with his cab at midnight on 21st June, 1791, the shortest night of the year, one of his greatest troubles being to avoid being drawn into conversation by other stationary cabdrivers.

As the escaping persons came out from the Tuileries separately, and at intervals, after the Governess and the sleepy children had reached his cab in safety the Count was compelled to take them for a drive round several streets. Shortly after his return to the appointed place of waiting, Madame

Élizabeth appeared, and then the King, dressed like one of the serving class in a round hat and short peruke. Louis XVI. had got out of bed and scrambled into his disguise while his personal valet, after drawing his curtains, had gone to another room to undress. In leaving the principal door of the Tuileries with many of the servants, who used that exit late at night, he had met with a slight mishap which might have proved fatal. His shoe strings being improperly fastened, his foot caught in one of them and he fell. He was good humouredly assisted to rise by the sentry of the Garde Nationale on the gate, who, without recognising the King, asked him if he had hurt himself.

Louis took his place in the cab with the others, but now occurred a fearful spell of anxiety, alike for Fersen the coachman and those seated within. For the Queen did not come! To make matters worse, the panels of the cab were, according to the fashion of the day, all of glass, which made it possible for any passers-by to look inside—to recognise Louis XVI. in the cab full of people, so strangly stopping in the same place instead of driving off.

While thus waiting, another cabdriver actually accosted Fersen. Fortunately he contented himself by asking the man whom he took for a brother " jarvey " to take a pinch of snuff and a drink with him, and did not concern himself as to the cause of his delay when his *carrosse* was occupied.

Much time was lost, and still Marie Antoinette did not appear. Horror of horrors! what if she had been recognised and detained—perhaps was already murdered! It must be admitted that the situation was, indeed, agonising.

At length, leaning upon the arm of a Bodyguard, disguised as a lackey, there appeared a young woman of soubrette-like appearance who wore a gipsy hat.

It was the Queen at last!

The explanation of her delay was that neither she nor her escort had known their way through the streets outside the Tuileries, and they had taken the wrong turn upon issuing to the Court of the Princes from an unguarded door which connected with the apartment formerly occupied by the Duc de Villequier. They had lost themselves and been compelled to retrace their steps to the palace, and there enquire from a sentinel the way to the Rue de l'Échelle, where Fersen had so long been awaiting them, with instant death staring him in the face in case he or the occupants of his conveyance were recognised. Upon her retracing her steps to the Tuileries, the Marquis de La Fayette, who was in command of the Garde Nationale, and, owing to his recent behaviour particularly obnoxious to the Queen, passed her in his coach. He was returning from the palace, where he had been to attend the King's *coucher*, but arrived too late, and in the open Place du Carrousel the torches carried by his men lighted up the Queen's face. One story has it that the Queen, in her hatred, then struck the wheels of his coach as it passed with the long wand that she carried, called a *badine*. Another account relates that the Marquis put his head out of the window, looked at and recognised Marie Antoinette, but said nothing and drove on.

When Fersen had put the Queen in his cab he hurriedly drove off with his precious load. After a

long drive owing to his imperfect knowledge of the small streets, he reached the Barrier Gate de Clichy, while being followed by the three members of the Bodyguard in another cab. They were allowed to pass out, but, to their horror, found that the berline was not there awaiting them. After waiting a long time, it was realised that the coach must in error be stationed outside one of the other gates. Making a long detour outside the city, in order to avoid repassing the barrier gate of issue, Fersen at last found the yellow travelling coach. It was fortunately not yet daylight. The Count therefore hurriedly kissed the hand of the adored Marie Antoinette and despatched the Royal party without further waste of time. The three Bodyguards mounted the box, their cab was upset into a ditch and left there, but before the coach started Axel Fersen pressed into the hands of one of them his silver-mounted pistols, which bore his name, and were afterwards discovered by the Queen's foes.

As the Comte turned his cab to drive back to the city it was with the ardent hope in his heart of soon meeting the Queen again under happier auspices in a foreign land.

Alas! for vain hopes. Partly owing to the mistakes of two officers, one the juvenile new Duc de Choiseul, the other the Chevalier de Bouillé, the second son of the Marquis, after the King had been recognised by a man named Drouet, the yellow coach was stopped by an overturned cart on the bridge at Varennes. Had but the Baron de Viomesnil been with the Royal party, to show a little of the resolution in which the King was lacking, the

bridge could easily have been forced, only very few being present to prevent the passage. Louis XVI., however, rather than fire upon Frenchmen, submitted to his fate, and tamely allowed himself to be taken with the Queen ignominiously back as prisoners to Paris. There they were subjected to the greatest humiliation.

CHAPTER XVIII

MARIE ANTOINETTE'S EXECUTION

HARD indeed was the lot of Marie Antoinette upon her return in disgrace to the Tuileries after her flight with her irresolute husband to Varennes.

While the three Bodyguards were attacked by the populace on arriving and severely injured at the door of the palace, the King and Queen were received in a solemn and chilling silence as they drove escorted as prisoners to the doors that they had escaped from in disguise five days earlier. The return had been tragic. During the drive across France an elderly noble, coming to the door of the yellow berline to pay his respects to his Sovereign, had been foully butchered within a few feet of the horror-stricken Royal Family. An old abbé had almost shared the same fate, but had been rescued by Barnave, one of the three delegates of the National Assembly who had proceeded to Varennes in pursuit of the King and Queen. Barnave with Pétion, two of these, returned in the Royal coach, and although both had hitherto been bitter opponents of the King, the conduct of the former

was characterised by marked delicacy throughout the journey back to Paris, and he afterwards in secret became the Queen's friendly adviser. Once, however, within the doors of the Tuileries, Marie Antoinette found herself treated as a criminal.

The Marquis de La Fayette, owing to whose actions in courting the popularity of the mob it had been possible for the revolutionary hordes to drag the Royal family to Paris in the previous October, now behaved in a manner utterly devoid of chivalry. Notwithstanding that he was one of those who still declared himself in favour of maintaining the King upon the throne as a Constitutional Monarch, this noble, whose name is still so highly regarded in America, shewed himself in his action towards the Queen to be lacking in the first principles of a gentleman. As commander of the Garde Nationale, La Fayette filled the Queen's apartments with the citizen soldiers, in whose sight she was kept day and night, even in her bedroom. Should she even have occasion to leave her room for a few minutes, Marie Antoinette was accompanied by one of these men of the National Guard with a loaded musket and with his bayonet fixed.

This excessive and cruel vigilance was, however, relaxed after a time, when the leading party in the National Assembly had declared itself in favour of maintaining the Monarchy, although with restrictions, and of only proceeding against the Marquis de Bouillé and Count Fersen, whom they asserted to have abducted the King.

Neither of these nobles fell, however, into the hands of the revolutionists. Bouillé went over the

frontier and joined the Austrians, while Fersen had made good his escape into Sweden. There, however, this brave young man was not content to remain. So great was his love for Marie Antoinette that, at no matter what risk to himself, he felt that he must see her again. From parts of his diary, published by his great-nephew, Baron Kinckowström, that he succeeded in doing so we know. The gallant Swede boldly returned to Paris disguised as a courier, when, according to an entry in his journal, he obtained access to the Queen " in the usual way." What that usual way was he was careful not to commit to paper; indeed, such was his caution that whole paragraphs in his diary were obliterated by himself in ink, in such a manner that not a word could be deciphered.

There was, however, in the years 1791 and 1792 still a mockery of a Court, and thus the Queen continued to be surrounded by her usual attendants after her return from Varennes. Some of these were no doubt in the secret, and thus able once more to smuggle Count Fersen into the presence of his beloved Queen. It was, however, his last interview with the unhappy Marie Antoinette. Before leaving the Tuileries the brave Swede sought Louis XVI. also, and tried to encourage the Monarch for whose sake he had dared so much with hopes of happier days to come.

After his last sad farewells, Fersen, who was provided with false papers, contrived to leave France as secretly as he had come, escaping over the Spanish frontier. Upon his return to his native country Axel Fersen was raised to great honours, becoming Grand Marshal of Sweden. His end

was, however, tragic, his fate being one that might easily have befallen him in France, as he was torn to pieces by a savage crowd in a revolution against the Swedish Monarchy.

By the middle of June, 1792, when a furious mob of *sans-culottes* armed with pikes and wearing red caps of liberty broke into the Tuileries and threatened the Royal family, the King and Queen had become convinced that their danger was extremely great. While Marie Antoinette, who courageously rose to the occasion the fiercer the storm, now endeavoured to arouse her wooden husband to assert himself like a man, Louis seemed to have fallen into a strange lethargy, to be satisfied to let matters take their course, no matter how bad they might be. Thus her words fell upon deaf ears, and it was in vain when the Tuileries was attacked by many thousands of insurgents upon the 10th August that the Queen besought Louis XVI. to go and make a stirring speech to the members of the National Guard stationed within the precincts of the palace, and offer, after the fashion of his ancestor, Henry of Navarre, to place himself boldly at their head to repulse the rebels.

Louis XVI., although by no means devoid of courage, then again showed himself lamentably wanting in initiative; as an excuse for his weakness it may perhaps be urged that, above everything, he wished to avoid shedding the blood of Frenchmen. As a result of the King's want of decision, while many nobles and all of his Swiss Guard were massacred in defending the Tuileries after the King had fled with his family to the National Assembly, that evening the whole of the Royal family were

confined as prisoners in the Monastery of The Feuillants.

Thence they were removed to the fortress of The Temple, where they were confined, while suffering the greatest indignities, until January 21st, 1793, when Louis XVI. was snatched from his family to perish upon the guillotine.

The lot of Marie Antoinette became even worse after the King had thus met his end, which he did with marked courage, upon the scaffold. While she and the King's sister, Madame Élizabeth, were forced to perform the most menial duties, and with her young daughter, Marie Thérèse, compelled to feed upon filthy garbage, her little son, the Dauphin (rightly now Louis XVII.), was torn from her. The poor boy was placed under the charge of a Municipal Officer of the Commune of Paris, a man named Simon, whose trade was that of a shoemaker.

The object of this fiend, with the connivance of the Revolutionary leaders Danton and Robespierre, would appear from the first to have been to torture to death the little heir to the throne. By neglect, by kicks, by blows, by forcing the child to become intoxicated, by causing him to sleep in a bed alive with vermin, Simon gradually accomplished his object. The Dauphin's knees swelled, he was seized with fevers, he became almost incapable of speech. The poor boy's body had become all covered with sores long before he succumbed, as had been desired, to this illtreatment. Towards the end, which was after both Danton and Robespierre had met their well-deserved death on the guillotine, he was visited by two respectable doctors. The guillotine having likewise relieved the child of the

horrible presence of the detestable Simon, he was at length removed from the filthy room in which he had been compelled for so long to live without any proper sanitary arrangements.

This improvement in treatment came, alas! too late, and in June, 1795, nearly three year after he had been first imprisoned in the Temple, the Dauphin died as the result of slow murder.

Marie Antoinette was never allowed to speak to her little son after, in spite of her shrieks and resistance, he was forcibly torn from her side. She was, with her sister-in-law and her daughter, at most only able to see him at times while taking exercise on the roof of the Temple, by looking through the chinks of a board partition expressly put up to keep mother and child apart.

A little less than a year after she had been removed to the Temple the Queen saw her child through a chink for the last time. Upon August 2nd, 1793, she was awakened in the dead of night, compelled to dress in the presence of Municipal Officers, torn from her daughter and the Princess Elizabeth and dragged off to the prison of the Conciergerie. For Marie Antoinette was to be tried for her life.

The King and Queen had been formally deposed a few days after their first imprisonment in The Temple, after which time the only name by which the Revolutionary authorities chose to designate Louis XVI. was the Citizen Louis Capet, the name of Capet having been that of his ancestor, Hugh Capet, who ascended the throne of France in the year 987.

Finding that it annoyed the King to be called by

this name, many of the Municipal officials used to address him the more frequently simply as Capet; the more polite, however, in speaking to their prisoner would use the word Monsieur. The King being dead, it was as Veuve Capet—the Widow Capet—that the fiends of the Revolution were now about to put Marie Antoinette on her trial. Upon her arrival at the Conciergerie she was thrust into a damp and dreary room and treated severely.

A wretch named Hébert, of whom Robespierre was afraid, had at this time gained great power, and it was in great measure owing to Hébert's action in the outrageous party, known in the Convention as The Mountain, that it had in the first instance been decided to butcher the unfortunate "Widow Capet."

Robespierre eventually contrived to guillotine Hébert with many of his adherents; before that, however, he joined with him in the scheme to assassinate the Queen by a mockery of a trial. Her treatment was all the worse as Hébert declared that neither she nor Madame Élizabeth ought to be any better treated than if they belonged to the family of a respectable sans-culotte instead of to that of a tyrant.

In her new prison Marie Antoinette was accordingly now subjected to the presence of two gendarmes in her cell day and night. At times it would appear that one of these men was removed, when doubtless the poor Queen found it even more terrible to be left with one alone. Being deprived of books or papers, also of all sewing materials, hearing no news of Madame Élizabeth or her daughter, the time passed drearily indeed. As an occupation, and also because her scanty clothing

was in a dilapidated condition, Marie Antoinette contrived to manufacture sewing materials for herself. She pulled threads out of the canvas upon which her tattered wallpaper was stretched, and with the use of a pin or a hairpin made herself a rough needle.

At first the Queen had a good-natured female attendant, but when a young woman named Madame Harel was sent to replace her, she found in her a hard-hearted woman utterly devoid of a spark of human kindness. This woman soon denounced an officer in disguise who was so foolish as to attempt to give the Queen a note when, by the aid of a friendly Municipal officer, named Michonnis, he had obtained access to Marie Antoinette. The note contained a plan for the Queen's escape, but alas! its only result was to make her imprisonment harder than before. The woman Harel was, however, soon removed as being untrustworthy, and in a girl named Rosalie Lamorlière who succeeded her, Marie Antoinette found a friend who aided her as much as she dared. As a punishment for the incident of the note, which had been concealed in the petals of a large carnation, the Queen was now deprived by the miserable Hébert of all her little stock of linen, with exception of some caps and fichus or scarves. She was only at long intervals, when Hébert found fit, supplied with a clean chemise. Hébert also caused her watch to be taken from her, although she begged with tears to be allowed to retain it. It was a beautiful watch, which Marie Antoinette had brought with her as a child from Vienna, and reminded her of the home where she had been happy

until her mother's ambition had sent her to occupy a French throne.

Hébert was not, however, disposed to gratify *l'Autrichienne*—the hated Austrian woman—by allowing her to retain an Austrian watch, and Marie Antoinette never saw her treasure again. The weather had turned to damp and cold long before the date, October 14th, 1793, that the Widow Capet was dragged before her judges. Being allowed, however, no fire, she sat and shuddered upon her bed while miserably clad with insufficient clothing.

Was there ever a more terrible reverse of fortune seen in the history of humanity! If Marie Antoinette had been guilty of frivolity and extravagance in the past, if she had squandered money upon her favourites when the people were starving, the self-appointed representatives of the people were now cruel and unjust where she had but been thoughtless.

While with fiendish malice taking such a bitter revenge upon a defenceless woman for her so-called crimes, they were themselves drenching France from end to end with the blood of the innocent of both sexes. It was in this very month of October that some of the worst crimes of the newborn Republic were being enacted at Lyons. There, in revenge for the well-merited death of an inhuman wretch named Joseph Chalier, batches of several hundred were being fusilladed at a time, since the guillotine could not work nearly quickly enough to complete the wholesale destruction of the inhabitants of the city, which was ordered to be wiped out completely.

There was a long string of charges against the Widow Capet read aloud when the Court opened in an immense and crowded upper hall of the Conciergerie.

But what mattered the charges advanced by the prosecutor, that horrible man of blood, Fouquier-Tinville, when all there assembled, whether judges, jurymen, or spectators, knew before the so-called trial commenced that the prisoner was condemned and sentenced in advance? Nevertheless, the farce was gone through of calling a number of witnesses. Some of these were themselves already under sentence of death, others were soon to die, while, although they had no idea of it at the time, Fouquier-Tinville and all his myrmidons, the jurymen, were themselves to meet with a bloody end upon the scaffold before many months should elapse. There was, indeed, a strange kind of retributive justice continually at work during the French Revolution, one by which the heads of the most popular tyrants of the day were to be seen being lopped off amidst the howls of the populace on the morrow!

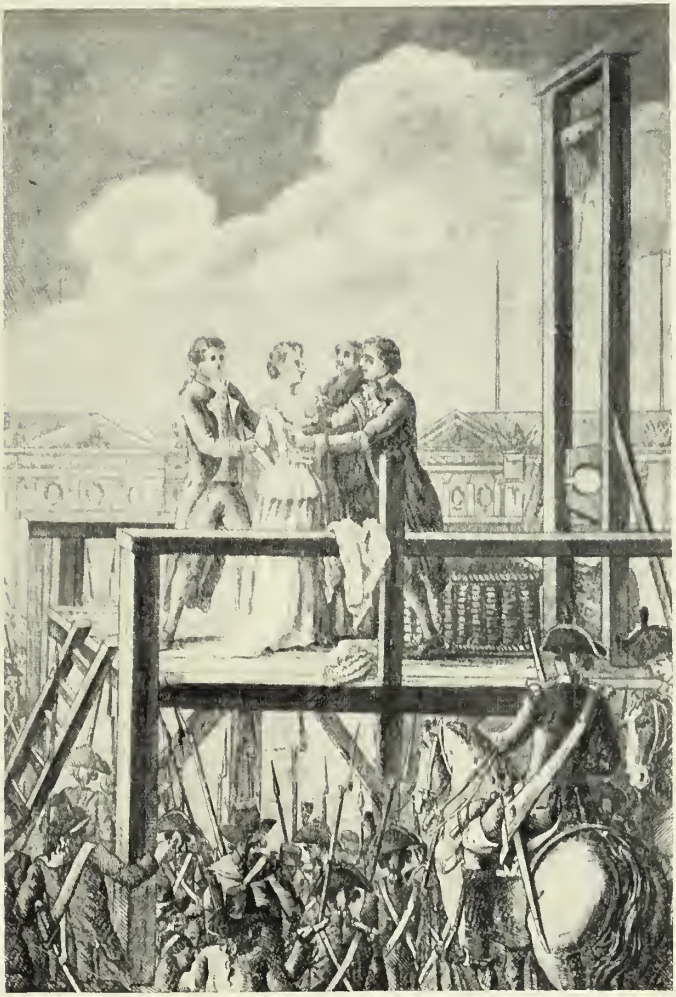
After two days of trial, sentence was pronounced upon the thirty-seven year old Queen at four o'clock in the morning of October 16th, 1793. Her execution was ordered to take place that same day. A short time later, the priest Girard found her sitting upon her bed, while complaining that she felt a mortal cold in her feet. The girl Rosalie insisted upon her taking a little hot bouillon, after which the Queen, who was suffering from a great loss of blood, was compelled to change her linen in the presence of an official who would not even allow Rosalie to

interpose her body between him and his victim. Nor, although the woman about to die begged him to withdraw for a moment, would this gendarme, who was a young man, consent to do so. He said that his orders were imperative—he must not lose sight of her for a second—but he spoke roughly in reply to the unfortunate Queen's gentle pleadings " in the name of modesty."

Whereas the King had been taken to the guillotine in a carriage, with the priest Father Edgeworth seated by his side, Marie Antoinette was allowed no such favour.

Young Sanson, the executioner, whose father had guillotined the King, arrived, and although she begged him not to tie her hands behind her back, the Queen's judges, who had arrived upon the scene, ordered him roughly to do so. He then cut off her hair, which had latterly commenced to turn white from grief, although she was so young, and crammed the tresses into his pocket.

Accompanied by the priest Girard and Sanson, the unhappy Queen was now hoisted into a tumbril and driven slowly off like a calf or a sheep to the slaughter, while seemingly perfectly indifferent to the mocking shouts of the crowds or the Republican flags and mottos everywhere suspended. Although bound, Marie Antoinette alighted from the tumbril quickly and without aid when it arrived at the place of execution in full view of the Tuileries. Alone also she ran lightly up the steps of the guillotine, and as she shook off the cap from her shorn head, there was not a sign of fear on the face of the poor victim of an inhuman people. Without a word or



THE EXECUTION OF MARIE ANTOINETTE
From a contemporary print

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a struggle, the Queen now yielded herself to the executioners to be lifted and strapped to the long board of the guillotine.

The clock in the Tuileries chimed the quarter after twelve, the heavy axe dropped between the high uprights, and, while the people wildly screamed "Vive la liberté!" the head of Marie Antoinette was divided from her body.

CHAPTER XIX

THÉROIGNE DE MÉRICOURT

It is upon the evening of October 5th, 1789, that we first hear of a young woman who may be described as the first of the Militant Suffragettes, although she differed in one respect from the unruly females who nowadays figure under that name. For while the Militant Suffragette of the twentieth century has expressed her intention of stopping short at the actual commission of murder, the subject of our story had no objection to dyeing her shapely hands in the blood of her fellow beings. Upon the evening above mentioned, while all was consternation within the precincts of the great palace of Versailles, without in the rain there surged a seething mob, composed at first for the most part, of furious, raging women.

The women of Paris in their thousands, armed, and dragging several cannon with them, had marched from the great city to invade the National Assembly, to forcibly express their hatred of Marie Antoinette and very possibly to tear to pieces the detested Austrian woman. Failing in accomplishing the murder of the Queen, upon one point all were deter-

mined, and that was to drag Louis XVI. and his family back with them to Paris, and compel them in the future to reside in their midst under their own eye. Thus only, declared the raging Mænads, could a supply of bread be ensured for the starving inhabitants of the capital.

While within the palace, in addition to many armed nobles, was the Bodyguard of the King, without in the grounds was stationed a newly-arrived regiment, which had been summoned from a distance for the better protection of the Royal family. This regiment, the Régiment de Flandre, was composed of men of Flemish birth; indeed, the greater number of the soldiers in the French service just before the Revolution were of foreign nationality, many of them being Swiss and German.

The arrival of the loyal Regiment of Flanders had, a few days earlier, been a signal for delight to their comrades in the Bodyguard, who had entertained the newcomers at a great dinner, which had been honoured by the presence of the Queen when the festivity was at its highest.

Then all present had, in their enthusiasm, dashed to the ground the hated tricolour cockade of the Revolution, and mounted in its place the white ribbon of Bourbon, or the black of Austria in honour of Marie Antoinette.

It was owing to the report which reached Paris of the trampling of the tricolour underfoot that the hatred of the people, who had not long since taken the Bastille, had been particularly aroused against the Queen, in whose presence, and with whose approval, had occurred the desecration of the popular emblem.

Although the King had at his command at a little distance, chiefly at Rambouillet, as many as 40,000 troops upon whom he could rely, the town of Versailles was at this time merely garrisoned by the citizen volunteers of the place, who belonged to that newly-raised force the Garde Nationale, of which the Commander-in-Chief in Paris was the Marquis de La Fayette.

The commander of the National Guards at Versailles was a draper named Lecointre. He held the rank of Major, and was, like many others who had lived by the benefits of the custom of those in the palace, particularly bitter against the Royal family. Knowing the disloyalty of the Garde Nationale of the place, the Comte d'Estaing, who commanded all the troops present at Versailles, had taken the precaution to supply no cartridges to the men under the rebellious Lecointre.

D'Estaing, who was in fact no soldier but an Admiral who had done good service at sea, had himself retired within the palace, while placing the members of the Bodyguard and the Flanders Regiment without the railings, to keep at bay the surging masses of women, who, having been largely reinforced by the male rabble of Paris, had been attempting to fire the cannon which they had brought with them from the city. In this attempt they failed, owing to the rain having wetted the powder in the guns through the touch-holes. Seeing, therefore, that, however truculent they might be, the masses of the mob had apparently no power to do any harm, d'Estaing gave explicit orders to the troops not to fire on the people, who were screaming and howling curses against the Queen.

With these people the men of the National Guard of Versailles had soon fraternised, while many of the women who were residents of Versailles had joined the thousands of female furies who had marched from Paris.

The hour was growing late, and while many of the women had invaded the National Assembly, where they gaily seated themselves upon the knees of the deputies, kissed the President, and took other liberties, the women without in the rain were becoming more and more exasperated against the mounted members of the Bodyguard. For twice had these interfered with them; the first time by charging a deputation of women proceeding to the palace to see the King, the second by rescuing from their hands a pretty girl named Louison Chabry, just as they were strangling her with their garters. The crime of Louison was that of having fallen almost fainting with fear into the King's arms, whereupon he had embraced her heartily, saying that "she was well worth the trouble." She had been one of the first deputation to gain access to Louis XVI. and to ask him to provide the people with bread, and, on account of the kindness shewn to her by the King, upon issuing from the palace her companions had accused her of being a Royalist.

While these events were taking place, one of the women had not been idle. She was a saucy, supple wench of lady-like appearance, one with bright eyes and insinuating manners. Presenting in no way the draggled appearance of the wretched creatures who had tramped through the rain from Paris, this young lady was attired in a *redingote* or surtout and riding

skirt of red silk. Upon her head was a hat adorned with a large feather, while strapped to her waist was a huge sabre. She was a Flemish girl who called herself by the high-sounding name of Mademoiselle Théroigne de Méricourt, and while not exactly a courtesan, had for the last few years been leading the life of a kept woman both in England and in France. In Paris she had already made herself remarkable, by her frequent speeches at the revolutionary gatherings at the Palais Royal, and the brilliancy of her attire at the opera, where she would appear in a box covered with diamonds.

Latterly, in order to follow the stormy debates taking place in the National Assembly, Théroigne, who was well supplied with money, had established herself in a house at Versailles. Upon the night of the 5th October she saw with disappointment that for want of cartridges the men under the draper Lecointre were unable to shoot down the Body-guards who protected " l'Autrichienne."

Being herself from Marcourt, in Luxembourg, a village in the neighbourhood of Liége, which was now in revolt against Austrian rule, Anne Josèphe Terwagne, to call the girl by her real name, greatly hated the Austrian Queen of France. She therefore soon set herself to remedy the matter of the deficient cartridges. She called to her aid many of the young *grisettes* and courtesans who had come from Paris, and made an onslaught upon the men of the Regiment of Flanders. This was not an onslaught of arms save in one sense, but an onslaught of love, with arms opened wide to embrace the soldiers.

Being herself of the Low Countries, Théroigne

was the better able to cajole her compatriots, the men from Flanders, into whose ranks she glided like a graceful snake. She had, moreover, plenty of money at her command, possibly obtained from her elderly protector, the Marquis de Persan, an old noble, upon whom she seemed always able to reckon for a supply, notwithstanding the fact that she was constantly openly unfaithful to him.

By distributing money among the soldiers of Flanders as readily as her kisses, Théroigne soon succeeded in corrupting them, and in thus obtaining cartridges, which were taken by her following sirens to the men of the Garde Nationale.

Thus supplied, the citizen soldiers of Lecointre began to fire upon the soldiers of the Bodyguard, who, being forbidden themselves to fire, were driven into the courtyard of the palace with some casualties. The men of the Flanders Regiment, taking no steps to assist their comrades of the Corps de Garde, retired for the night to the great stables. There they were accompanied by Théroigne's squadron of ladies of easy virtue, who followed up the advantage that they had gained, with the result that in the morning the Régiment de Flandre was completely demoralised and openly disloyal.

When, therefore, at an early hour the Parisian mob stormed the palace of Versailles and sought to kill the Queen, there were none to assist the brave Bodyguards, who held the door of her bedchamber until she had escaped, wearing only an unfastened petticoat, by another door to the King's apartments.

A question that has often arisen is: Why did not the then popular La Fayette, who had arrived in the

night with the Garde Nationale from Paris, prevent this storming of the Royal palace. The usual excuse given is that, being weary, he had gone to bed at an hôtel and was asleep when the mob of mingled men and women broke into the palace and killed seven of the Bodyguards. But surely there are moments when a Commander-in-Chief should not go to bed! The inference apt to be drawn from La Fayette's inaction is that, having been to America to fight for the insurgent colonists against their King, he wished by his non-interference at an early hour on October 6th to appear in a purely revolutionary, even a Republican, light in the eyes of the maddened and blaspheming populace. Thus would he preserve the popularity of the fickle mob of Paris, a mob which later would have none of him, with the result that he had to fly from France, to find first a Prussian and then an Austrian prison.

After the mob had obtained possession of the palace and looted a great portion of it, La Fayette did, however, make his appearance and join the King and Queen, which latter, by his presence by her side on a balcony, he probably saved from a death by musketry fire. It was a doubtful benefit for poor Marie Antoinette—she might just as well have met with a sudden death on a balcony of Versailles in October, 1789 as one on a scaffold after four years of long-drawn-out misery in October, 1793!

To return to Théroigne de Méricourt. We may feel assured that she was one of those to invade the precincts of the desecrated palace upon whose erection Louis XIV. had expended so many millions. We may feel certain also that she was one of the crowd that escorted Louis XVI. and Marie An-

toinette in triumph to Paris, while the heads of two of their faithful Bodyguards were carried on pikes before them.

For this young lady, whose manners were so seductive and whose voice was so sweet, either on the concert stage or elsewhere, was not one to do things by halves. Having set her hand to the revolutionary plough, Anne Josèphe Terwagne would never turn back until her destiny should be accomplished. In the meantime, she would go ahead, hold a sort of salon, found clubs, clamour for equal political rights for men and women, write pamphlets, issue proclamations, live awhile near rebellious Liége, be imprisoned in Austria, cajole the Emperor into letting her go free, return to France to figure in various sanguinary adventures, and all the while find time and means to live as the mistress of some of the sagest men who figured in the annals of Revolutionary France. For instance, the Abbé Sieyès, who twice drew up the Constitution, and Charles Romme, who invented the extraordinary Revolutionary calendar, with its Messidors, Fructidors, and Thermidors, were among her lovers. Likewise, Gilbert Romme, his scientific brother, who helped Théroigne to found a literary club. Not to mention Pétion, the Mayor of Paris, who once squeezed the arm of the poor Princess Élizabeth in a coach while returning from flight to Varennes, and who vowed that she returned his pressure. And all the time Théroigne was attending the speechifyings at the Clubs of the Cordeliers and the Jacobins, and even herself joining in the same. Moreover, considering herself so strong that she even ventured to say, at a time when he was most powerful, that she

" withdrew her confidence from Robespierre!" In good sooth, this Théroigne was a most extraordinary and certainly a forceful woman, even if the people of the Revolution would not listen to her at all when she cried out loudly for " Votes for women." No, they fustigated her instead, in the most indecent manner, in public. But we are anticipating; let us not yet therefore refer to that unfortunate incident in the career of a really interesting if very dangerous young person, one, moreover, who paid dearly as a penalty of such an exciting existence.

To get vivid word pictures of Anne Josèphe Terwagne, it is well to refer to the pages of Carlyle and see how, in his delightful, grotesquely cryptic utterances, the Sage of Chelsea refers to her.

We find the first mention of the Belgian peasant girl at a time when, according to her own Confessions, she was probably on a visit to England to see the rich young man of fashion with whom she lived as his mistress for several years. Carlyle, in his description of the procession of the opening of the States General, misses the young firebrand from the pageant, and exclaims:

" But where is the brown-locked, light-behaved, fire-hearted Demoiselle Théroigne? Brown, eloquent Beauty; who with thy winged words and glances shalt thrill rough bosoms, whole steel battalions, and persuade an Austrian Kaiser—pike and helm lie provided for thee in due season; and, alas, also straight-waistcoat and long lodging in the Salpêtrière! Better hadst thou stayed in native Luxembourg and been the mother of some brave man's children; but it was not thy task, it was not thy lot."

Another reference of the Sage to our heroine is found when he describes the events of the 5th October, 1789, at Versailles. " But already Pallas Athene (in the shape of Demoiselle Théroigne) is busy with Flandre and the dismounted Dragoons. She, and such women as are fittest, go through the ranks, speak with an earnest jocosity; clasp rough troopers to their patriot bosom, crush down spontoons and musketoons with soft arms. Can a man, that were worthy of the name of man, attack famishing patriot women? " Previously, Carlyle has fallen into error, when he describes our fair Luxembourgeoise as accompanying the women on their march from Paris. But the fanciful picture that he draws is too picturesque not to be quoted: " What a rub-a-dub is that? Stanislas Maillard, Bastille-hero, will lead us to Versailles? Joy to thee, Maillard; blessed art thou above Riding-Ushers. Away, then, away!

" The seized cannon are yoked with seized cart horses; brown-locked Demoiselle Théroigne, with pike and helmet, sits there as gunneress, ' with haughty eye and serene fair countenance '; comparable some think to the Maid of Orleans, or even recalling ' the idea of Pallas Athene.' "

Later, the excellent Sage is once more mistaken, when he says that Anne Josèphe had not the money wherewith to bribe the soldiers. It is evident that he had not at his disposal modern sources of information as to her resources when he remarks: " One reads that Théroigne had bags of money, which she distributed over Flandre; furnished by whom? Alas! with money-bags one seldom sits on insurrectionary cannon. Calumnious Royalism!

Théroigne had only the limited earnings of her profession of unfortunate-female; money she had not, but brown locks, the figure of a Heathen Goddess, and an eloquent tongue and heart."

Although in her absences from Paris Théroigne was frequently to be found writing to her bankers urgent letters for money, she was always able to procure it, which proves that her credit was good. She herself always maintained that she had a large regular income, derived from funds supplied by the generosity of her early lovers—notably the English young man of fashion whom she names, although the matter is doubtful, as the destroyer of her innocence. Even at the very end of her career we find her driving about in her carriage in Paris. We may therefore conclude that " the brown-locked Pallas Athene really had the money bags wherewith to bribe Flandre."

In the earlier part of the revolutionary epoch, while Louis XVI. was ruling from the Tuileries as a Constitutional King, the insidious and honey-tongued Théroigne appears to have thought that the good of her health required her presence in her native country. In other words, as the King had plenty of supporters still in Paris, both among the Royalists and at the political Club of the Feuillants, it is more than likely that the too-enterprising *fille entretenue* feared the active reprisals of some of those who were convinced that she had endeavoured to bring about the assassination of Marie Antoinette. She was accustomed to travelling; at one time she had even taken with her to Italy, at her own expense, the famous but hideous tenor Tenducci, whom she had met in England, and

who had trained her really excellent voice while filling his gaping pockets with her gold.

It was, therefore, nothing for Mademoiselle de Méricourt to take a little drive from Paris to her native Luxembourg, but she departed quietly, without any beat of drum or flourish of trumpet. Nevertheless, the Royalists had their eye upon her, and, accordingly, after she had been some time in Belgium and taking an active interest in the affairs of revolutionary Liège, Théroigne met with an unpleasant surprise. One night she was awakened in her room at an inn by two gentlemen, who represented themselves as her friends, Austrians who had come to save her from the French Royalists. So friendly were they that, while at their invitation she was rising from her bed and putting on her clothes, they went through all her effects, saying that her papers would be safer in their keeping than her own. Then these amiable gentlemen, who were indeed French nobles in disguise, invited the brown-locked Théroigne to come for a drive with them, saying that her safety made such a nocturnal expedition necessary. So careful were they of the precious person of the dangerous young firebrand that, while pretending to make love to the graceful girl on the way, they drove her all across Germany, until they eventually landed her in the frowning Austrian fortress of Kufstein in the Tyrol. Here Théroigne was left as a prisoner, and in great danger of losing her life as the attempted murderess of the Austrian Queen of France. Her powers of lying and her powers of persuasion, however, stood the seductress of Flandre in good stead, and she employed both with such continued dissimulation upon her gaolers

that they did not know what to make of her. When, eventually, she was transferred, after another long drive, to Vienna, she made violent love to the magistrate who conducted her in a coach and four, and so worked upon his sympathy that he supplied her very largely with cash from his own pocket. For, where wheedling money out of a man was concerned, Théroigne de Méricourt had at her disposal all the arts of the most practiced courtesan, and employed them freely with success.

So clever was she that upon arrival at Vienna, where she was to await her trial, the attractive Pallas Athene of the 5th October contrived to be placed in no prison, but installed, under an assumed name, in a private residence, where she had servants to wait upon her. Being now able to go out when she chose, she succeeded in deceiving the good natured official who was supplying her with his money while drawing up the charges against her. Thus the intriguing minx was smart enough, quite unknown to him, to gain access upon several occasions both to that celebrated Minister and man of the world Prince Kaunitz and the Emperor Leopold II., the brother of Marie Antoinette.

No militant suffragette now, no revolutionary female who had seduced " whole steel battalions," no would-be murderess of a Queen; to these great men she posed as a poor little woman who longed for nothing more than the quiet joys of a home, which, owing to the necessity of making her way in a wicked world, that wicked world had hitherto denied her. Lovers! Well, she might have had one, or perhaps two, but if men were such deceivers as to make love

with promises of matrimony which they did not intend to fulfil, was she to blame?

Kaunitz and Leopold looked at the eyes of the little woman who addressed them so eloquently—glanced at each other and smiled significantly. No, she was surely no murderess, but dangerous, distinctly dangerous to the hearts and pockets of men. One might let her go, but it might be as well not to keep this too seductive creature in Austria, lest her balance at the bank should be too largely swelled at the expense of the Emperor's Austrian subjects.

The result of her interviews with these great personages became apparent upon Théroigne's trial. She was acquitted of having attempted to murder Marie Antoinette. The judge, however, gave her a great scolding, and told her that she and all women who thought and acted like her were mischievous to a degree. But she was to be set free—to be sent back to Liége; moreover, the Emperor had been compassionate enough to decree that she should be awarded the sum of six hundred florins for her pocket money upon the journey thither.

For some nine months of the year 1791 the insiduous Anne Josèphe had been imprisoned upon Austrian soil, but by the second month of 1792 she had arrived in Paris once more. Nor in all her subsequent revolutionary activity, all her eloquent and violent speeches against monarchs and monarchy, had she ever anything but a good word to say for the Emperor Leopold II. He had behaved like a gentleman, and had known how to recognise merit when it came under his eyes! From which we may observe that the little woman of Luxembourg

was not deficient of one good quality—that of gratitude.

How Théroigne was welcomed at the Club of the Cordeliers, the meeting-place of such bloody rascals as Danton and his crew, we see from the pen of the clever young journalist Camille Desmoulins, a man who was used by his friend Robespierre until he thought fit to cut off his head, and then that of his charming young wife, Lucile.

"The orator is interrupted. A noise is heard at the door, a flattering, agreeable murmur. A young woman comes in and wishes to speak. What! it is none less than Mademoiselle Théroigne, the beautiful amazon of Liége. Yes, certainly, it is her *redingote* of red silk, her great sabre of the 5th October. The enthusiasm is intense! Already she has tripped through the whole Assembly with the light tread of a panther, she has sprung to the tribune. Her pretty inspired head, darting lightnings, appears between the sombre apocalyptical faces of Danton and Marat."

Upon this visit to the Cordeliers, Théroigne made a great and impassioned speech upon what was considered a great subject. She proposed that upon the site of the now destroyed Bastille should be erected a beautiful palace of liberty to house the members of the National Assembly, the representatives of the nation which had destroyed that barbarous emblem of monarchical oppression. Her design was approved of, but never carried out.

Upon the 10th August, 1792, the "fair gunneress" of Carlyle became an amazon indeed, taking part in all the bloody incidents in the attack

upon the Tuileries and the massacre of the Swiss garrison. For her active participation in these sanguinary events, Théroigne was awarded a "civic crown" of virtue!

She, however, became an active murderess upon this same date, revenging herself upon a very clever and energetic Royalist writer, named Suleau, for the ridicule he had poured upon her head in the press of both Paris and Brussels. When Suleau and some others were captured by the blood-stained mob, a commissary mounted on a platform and begged the people to spare his life. Théroigne then tore down the commissary, and, replacing him, urged the crowd to kill Suleau. The guards surrounding the unfortunate journalist were ordered to hand over Suleau and his fellow prisoners to the crowd. As they came forth one by one from the ranks of the National Guard, which had been protecting them, their throats were cut and they were torn to pieces. Suleau, however, made a good fight for his life, seizing a sabre from the hands of one of his assailants, and laying about him like fury. Then, according to the records, Théroigne de Mericourt herself rushed in with her sabre and assisted in cutting down the unfortunate man, who was hewn in pieces. Not long after this Théroigne, who had to her fury been made fun of at the Jacobin Club for saying that she "withdrew her esteem from Robespierre," associated herself closely with the party of Brissot, the Girondin opponent of Robespierre. The party of the Mountain were, however, avenged upon this young lady who gave herself such airs. Upon the Terrace of the Tuileries, in front of the Feuillants, she was surrounded by a gang of

savage Robespierrists, among them many degraded women. They seized Théroigne, and, despite her screams, turned her petticoats up over her head and flogged her violently. Owing to the ridicule attached to this humiliation she lost her political importance, and in the year 1794 she lost her senses and was shut up for life in the Salpêtrière. She lived as a maniac until the age of fifty-seven.

CHAPTER XX

MADAME ROLAND

Although differing entirely in the nature of their activities from the seductive but violent Théroigne de Méricourt, there were other women who pulled the wires during the French Revolution. Some of these acted from personal ambition, a desire to make themselves talked about. Of these the principal was Madame de Staël. Madame de Genlis, who pulled the strings for the Orléans' party, was one who was animated by the double principle of attachment to her lover, Duc Philippe d'Orléans, and the establishment of her reputation for unusual cleverness and discernment.

The Dutch Madame Palm-Aelder was an out and out exponent of the principle of equal political rights for either sex, upon which subject she might be heard eloquently discanting at the re-unions of the Cercle Social. Sophie de Grouchy, an excessively clever and loveable young lady, who became Marquise de Condorcet, is supposed by some to have thrown herself heart and soul into the Revolution because she had been snubbed by the Court. The extreme, if modest, talents of Madame de Condorcet, in

addition to a disappointment in love, first compelled this ex-Chanoinesse to plunge into restless participation with the events of the day.

Later, the affection that she developed for the last of the *philosophes*, the man twenty-five years her senior who had given her his name, compelled her to continue her agitations behind the scene. Her influence was none the less important. Another woman who for long whirled round and round on the vortex which eventually swallowed her up, was Olympe de Gouges. This talented creature, who came from Languedoc in the South, was possessed of an ardent temperament which led her into many follies. She was a remarkable genius, although utterly uneducated, being an *improvisatrice* who could dictate at any moment a tragedy or comedy which could be played with brilliant success. Olympe de Gouges, who could scarcely write her name, remains famous for the remarkable utterance by which she sought to support her claim for equal political rights for both sexes. She said: "The women have certainly the right to mount to the tribune since they have that of mounting to the scaffold."

Poor Olympe! The time came when she was about to be called to the place of execution, whereupon she struggled hard to escape the guillotine. A woman of many lovers, she declared herself to be enceinte by one of them, but the plea was not allowed, and her head fell with many others while she was still comparatively a young woman.

Of all those who figured on the revolutionary scene, the woman who was possessed of the greatest ability for political affairs was undoubtedly Madame

Roland. Not only was she able to sway the Girondin party, for long the most important of the Revolutionary Era, but for a period that party may be said to have centred in her.

A very handsome young woman of bourgeois extraction, Manon Phlipon became the wife of an elderly official, M. Roland de la Platière. Owning the small country estate of La Platière, near Lyons, M. Roland had led a life of work, being for many years the Inspector of Manufactures. Himself possessing considerable intelligence, while making his frequent journeys across France on horseback his thoughts would revert to the robust, high-complexioned and bright-eyed girl some twenty-five years his junior, in whom he thought that he had discovered a kindred spirit. Manon (who was born on March 17th, 1754, in the city of Paris), had her birth and means but warranted her in so doing, would gladly have plunged into the gay doings of the Court of Marie Antoinette. She was compelled, however, by circumstances to lead a humdrum, uneventful existence. M. Roland had discovered in the girl when she was about twenty a nature which did not seem to be bored by listening, one not unwilling to receive with attention the details which he imparted to her concerning all the great works of France. Consequently a long and active correspondence was carried on, during which the elderly man would describe his wanderings, which sometimes led him into Italy, and discant upon the commercial, social, and religious aspects of the places in which he might find himself. M. Roland was of the philosophical, that is to say anti-religious, school for which the 18th Century was so

remarkable in France. It is to be presumed from the fact that, while having left her home to board in a convent, Manon found her greatest pleasure in reading Jean Jacques Rousseau, the young lady was also strongly imbued in the philosophical doctrines.

The girl was not well off, and is said to have been unable to live with her father because of his dissolute life. M. Roland was also at variance with his parents, who were very devout and ardent aristocrats, whereas his observations concerning the condition of France had early caused his feelings to be entirely opposed to those of his family.

Eventually, in the year 1780, when she was nearly twenty-six years old, he married the young beauty of plebeian type, when her ambition led to her receiving a snubbing when she sought to be received at the Court, and applied for a patent of nobility, which was refused. From that time Manon Roland hated the Queen. Indeed, during the continuance of the Revolution which commenced in 1789 there was no more constantly bitter enemy of Marie Antoinette than the wife of the Inspector of Manufactures. If ever one woman contributed to the downfall of another, Madame Roland actively aided to push the flighty and unfortunate Queen along the road which terminated in the scaffold.

As the wife of M. Roland, with whom she often lived at La Platière, Manon developed into his amanuensis. Her industry was remarkable, moreover, however dry the subject, she never shirked her labours of copying, translating or compiling. Having given birth to one child, her relations with Roland seem to have become platonic rather than wifely. She is represented, indeed, as having

looked upon him more in the light of a father than a husband. As the years passed by, while she retained her youthful beauty and vigour unimpaired, Roland shewed the signs of his age. He became delicate, his stomach was weak, and a great part of her time was occupied with nursing his ailments.

Leading a life which, from necessity rather than choice, was free from social excitements, the woman in whom, as she herself says, the passions were strongly developed, was thrown back upon herself in a great measure, and sought her entertainment in her work. As the Revolution continued, this work became largely political, but the clever brain of Madame Roland would seem to have been more exercised to devise measures calculated to injure the Monarchy than those to improve the lot of the people.

Although her husband never became the nonentity which it has pleased some writers to represent him, there is no doubt but that Manon became the ruling factor in the household—that she directed his will by her own—that his political acts were her political acts. So much was this recognised, that frequently in the history of the French Revolution we do not find the name of Roland de la Platière at all. Although he was a Minister of State, it is on the other hand always: "Madame Roland did this," or "a mistake of Madame Roland's Ministry was that," and so on.

The influence was early felt in the great city of Lyons, the centre of the silk industry of France, in which place occurred some of the most appalling and long-drawn-out tragedies, the most awful horrors of the Revolution.

This influence is very clearly depicted in the charmingly-natural and thrilling Memoirs of Alexandrine des Écherolles, a young lady who was present in the city throughout the terrible scenes of the Revolution, the counter-Revolution, the siege, the renewal of the Revolution, the fusillades in batches of several hundreds at a time, the ceaseless guillotinings and other horrors.

In the introduction to the last published edition of these Memoirs we find: "Madame Roland, who had been one of the first to sow the seeds of violence in Lyons in the early days of her Republican idealism, writing three years later in the prison of Sainte Pelagie, with the clearness of view which imminent death brought to her keen intellect, describes the city as 'a great town flourishing in consequence of its manufactures and commerce, interesting by its antiquities and its collections, brilliant from its riches—now a vast tomb in which are buried the victims of a Government a hundred times more atrocious than the very despotism on the ruins of which it is elevated.'"

Again, elsewhere, we find: "In the summer of this year (1790) a Jacobin Club was founded by Roland, a member of the Municipality. Lyons was too narrow a field for Madame Roland, who in February, 1791, carried her husband to Paris, and the Jacobin Club soon fell into the hands of a widely different personage, Josephe Chalier, ex-priest, the Marat of Lyons, who gradually made himself the master of the Municipality as well as of the Club. His days were few, but they were exceeding evil."

Thus we see that in her prison Madame Roland

finds fault with the Government of the party of The Mountain. It was that to which belonged such members of the Jacobin and Cordeliers Clubs as Danton, Couthon, Robespierre, Marat, Collot-d'Herbois, Camille Desmoulins, and Saint-Just, and which overthrew and guillotined most of her own party of the Girondins. She forgets, however, to comment on the fact that, by herself first starting a branch of the Jacobins at Lyons, she had been the originator of all the mischief which ensued.

The memoirs which she wrote in her prison were saved for publication by a friend named Bosc, who was subsequently guillotined, but the great Lamartine comments very adversely upon her character as revealed by herself in this story of her life. It is only just to add that a French Republican writer considers them as "immortal leaves" (*feuilles immortelles*). The author comments upon the fact that, although she was of a passionate disposition, Manon writes: "None have known voluptuousness less than I," and again, "I have kept my senses under control." Unfortunately for his heroine, he rather qualifies his encomiums upon her virtue by relating a long and piquant anecdote concerning her very intimate relations with a certain gentleman named Bancal des Issarts, who stayed a long time with her at La Platière, and to whom she wrote in a manner which was "adorably imprudent."

Bancal was, however, "*sage*," and went on a journey, and the danger was apparently postponed by his staying in England "longer perhaps than Madame Roland wished it herself." Again, we learn that "her letters offer a strange fluctuation. She withdraws herself, she approaches, by moments

she mistrusts herself, by moments she strengthens." In the end, the idyll with the "*sage et honnête*" Bancal results in considerable danger for the vaunted virtue of the vacillating Manon. It is only averted when she goes to Paris "with the secret joy in her heart of finding him there." He has played her false, however, and does not come until she has become so deeply involved in Revolutionary politics that the only love for which she has got time left is apparently "love for France."

The contemporaries of Madame Roland, however, were unkind enough to say that, even in her days of greatest political excitement, this warm-blooded beauty of thirty-seven, who looked upon her husband as her father, found time to love and be loved by three other gentlemen with whom she was very much mixed up. These were the able Girondin deputy Buzot, with whose aid she controlled her husband's policy; Colonel Servan, of whom she made a Minister of War; and, above all, the handsome young Barbaroux, whom she sent to Marseilles to bring to Paris five hundred braves "who should know how to die." These five hundred Marseillais it was who, many of them with bloody hands fresh from the awful massacres of Avignon, instigated and commenced the horrible scenes connected with the storming of The Tuileries upon August 10th, 1792, which resulted in the imprisonment and death of Marie Antoinette. Although the stories told about Manon and these three lovers were probably exaggerated, surely if the vindictive lady ever distinguished any of them by her favours, it should, from sheer gratitude, have been Barbaroux, who was the direct means of the

accomplishment of her vengeance upon the unfortunate Queen.

With reference to the ferocity of the hostility that Madame Roland displays against Marie Antoinette, Lamartine remarks: "Her rôle had been a mere parade of true greatness of soul. She inspired the Girondins, her intimate friends, with an implacable hatred against the Queen, already so humiliated and so menaced. She had neither respect nor pity for her victim. She points her out to the rebellious multitude. She is no longer a wife, a mother, or a Frenchwoman."

Another writer—Saint-Armand—comments adversely upon the moral character of Manon, declaring that from her own writings she proves herself by no means so pure as she would have people imagine her to be.

When the Roland couple first came to Paris it was in connection with the business of the city of Lyons. It was in the early part of the year 1791, and Madame Roland at once threw herself violently into the burning politics of the day, urging the already somewhat tired deputies of the Assembly to shew more activity in their action against the Monarchy. When, in the month of June of that year, Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette made their unsuccessful flight to Varennes, she may be said to have become the first of the Republicans, urging her friends, who were chiefly of the Girondin faction, to instantly proclaim the deposition of the King.

Greatly disappointed when milder counsels prevailed, she then for a time sought the friendship of the violent and insidious Robespierre, condescending to flatter grossly this leader of the opposing party

of The Mountain. The Girondins, we may mention, took their name from the department of the Gironde in the south-west, whence came the majority of their number, while those of the Mountain—the "*Montagnards*"—were called by that appellation from the fact that they occupied the most elevated seats in the Assemblée Nationale and, its successor, the Assemblée Législative, and subsequently also in the Convention. At the time of the first visit of Madame Roland to Paris, Robespierre was a member of the first-named Assembly, while, being also the leader of the violent Jacobin Club, his influence was greater than that of many of the actual legislators. He had been the deputy for Arras in the States General of 1789, which body had soon proclaimed itself the National Assembly. When, after having framed the first Constitution, this set of deputies had separated on September 30th, 1791, they had voted themselves unable to sit in the subsequent Legislative Assembly. Many of them, however, including Robespierre, had seats in the Convention, elected by universal suffrage in September, 1792.

CHAPTER XXI

MADAME ROLAND GUILLOTINED

The members of the rabid Jacobin Club, at which the Duc d'Orléans was a frequent speaker, were no less disgusted than Madame Roland when, after the King's flight, the Assembly determined to leave him on the throne as a Constitutional Monarch. They, therefore, got up a monster petition for his deposition. On the 17th July, 1791, this was taken to an immense erection called the Altar of the Country in the middle of the plain where the soldiers exercised, known as the Champ de Mars. It was there to be signed by the disloyal men and women of Paris in their thousands. As there were disturbances, during which two men were killed, early in the day of the signing of the petition, the members of the National Assembly became alarmed for their own safety, and sent General La Fayette at the head of the National Guards to preserve order. La Fayette and M. Bailly, the Mayor of Paris, were both shot at, while stones were thrown at the citizen soldiers. When the mob of sans-culottes commenced, in addition, to call by the name of police spies, men who had distinguished themselves in the capture of the Bastille, the soldiers lost their temper and com-

menced firing upon the crowd without waiting for orders. Many were killed at this so-called " massacre " of the Champ de Mars, and Paris was thrown into a state of consternation. Soldiers were sent to close the doors of the Jacobin Club, and to the residences of some of those instrumental in getting up the petition, and upon that evening the life of Robespierre was undoubtedly in the greatest danger from the dagger or pistol of some member of the Royalist party in Paris.

It was now that Madame Roland shewed the greatest concern for the safety of this snivelling scoundrel, whose lachrymose self-pitying speeches always drew sympathetic tears from the crowds of women who listened to them from the " tribunes " or galleries of the Jacobin Club. Despite the danger of being in the streets upon such an occasion, she went at eleven o'clock at night to seek and offer an asylum to the man who, like herself, would abolish the King and Queen. She did not, however, find him in the distant quarter of Le Marais in which he lived, he having been given a refuge by a Madame Duplay, the wife of a furniture dealer. Madame Roland, however, exerted herself at once to have him protected in the then very powerful Feuillants Club and the Assembly. She begged her intimate friend, Buzot, to speak up for him, but he was afraid or unwilling to do so. Buzot, however, found in the ex-priest Grégoire a man with more courage to accede to the wishes of the agitated Manon and to defend one of the most infamous murderers that ever posed in the guise of a patriot. He spoke, with the result that no proceedings were taken against Robespierre, who, however, while in

danger deserted his own Club and joined the Feuillants.

Between him and Madame Roland there soon existed a state of constant jealousy, each being envious of the other's influence in the progress of the Revolution. This did not prevent her, upon her return to Lyons a little later, from writing Robespierre a long and gushing letter of praise. Like Robespierre himself, Madame Roland was for ever writing, in season and out of season. Both of them fancied their style, taking the greatest pains in the selection of their phrases and the rounding off of their sentences. Robespierre was, however, so little impressed with the flowery and adulatory sheets addressed to him by the handsome Manon, that he never even took the trouble to reply to her letter.

In the following year, 1792, when the throne was in imminent danger, although Louis XVI. still continued at the head of the Executive Government as a Constitutional King, the Rolands were back in Paris. The party of the Gironde was then supreme, and Madame Roland, that is to say her husband, became Minister of the Interior, being forced upon the King. Then, while coquetting with the deputies Buzot and Barbaroux, the fair Manon continually excited her husband against the King, notwithstanding that his gentleness and uprightness had touched the Ministers in spite of themselves. Roland was now a mere tool in his wife's hands, and she boasted that she wrote for him all his ministerial despatches.

The Roland Ministry came into power in March, 1792, and while, before long, Madame Roland contrived to make her favourite Colonel de Servan

Minister of War, she had to accept the sturdy but not particularly scrupulous General Dumouriez as the real leader of the Ministry. Dumouriez, who was Minister of Foreign Affairs, was a very brave and remarkable man, who had tried various careers without great success, and who, while posing as a Republican, was a Royalist at heart. He subsequently showed himself to be one of the ablest Generals who ever fought for France, which he saved from the invasion of the Prussians and Austrians, and for which country he won some brilliant victories.

When, in spite of his brilliant services at the head of the Republican armies, Robespierre and his gang became suspicious of Dumouriez, they sent three Commissaries, with War Minister Beurnonville and Archivist Camus, to arrest him. They had done the same to General de Custine and his son, and other good soldiers, whom they mistrusted, and therefore sent to the guillotine. Dumouriez had, however, no intention of being rewarded for his magnificent victories by the loss of his head, and promptly turned the tables upon the Convention which sought to serve him in such a shabby manner.

Although Beurnonville embraced Dumouriez warmly upon his arrival at the village of Saint-Armand des Boues, the General was wide-awake and ready prepared. He declined as politely, when politely requested to come to Paris to have a little chat with the Convention, whereupon Camus became angry, and in a blustering manner shouted: "Général Dumouriez, we place you under arrest! Now will you obey and come with us? Now, Monsieur, will you obey the nation?"

MADAME ROLAND

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" Sorry to be unable to oblige you, gentlemen, but, to begin with, it is not I, but you, who are arrested! Here, Orderly, bring round the carriages and the escort at once! Officers, seize these men! "

In a trice the War Minister, the Archivist, and the three *Commissaires* were ignominiously bundled into two post-chaises, and sent off at a gallop, as a present to the commander of an Austrian army near at hand, and the next day Dumouriez followed them himself, although he had to ride hard for his life under a heavy fire from his own troops.

Such was the man—one of ready resource! But the wife of the elderly man whom a French writer of the day likened to a " Quaker in his Sunday-go-to-meeting clothes " did not at all appreciate his presence in the Cabinet. To begin with, when Dumouriez paid his first visit to her, Manon Roland fancied that he had a roving eye, which she flattered herself that he fixed with an air of appropriation upon her charms. Although, according to Saint-Armand, " she was a rank coquette and by no means pure minded," and consequently had, we may presume, a roving eye herself, the fair lady considered that to her was due the monopoly of the bestowal of fervent glances in the sacred grove of the Patriot Ministry. Moreover, Dumouriez was a man of fifty—and further, had not she heard something about a certain fair Baronne de Beauvert in connection with the gallant General?

If Madame Roland disliked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, whom she found too downright and not sentimental enough to please her, for his part we are informed " he was not at all pleased with

the pretensions and affectations of this blue stocking, and her attempt at despotic rule."

Although Madame Roland caused her husband to treat the King insolently, the first Girondin Ministry contrived to hold together until the fatal day when Louis XVI. was bold enough to exercise his power of Veto, and refused to sanction two particularly obnoxious measures. These were one for the deportation of all priests who would not swear obedience to the Constitution instead of the Pope, and the other for the establishment of a camp of twenty thousand volunteers in Paris, to overawe the King and the Royalist party.

The King dismissed all of the Girondin Ministers, with exception of Dumouriez, rather than give his sanction to these decrees, which they pressed upon him. Could Dumouriez now but have joined hands with La Fayette, who was veering to the Royalist side, the two together would have been able to back up Louis XVI. in the matter, and the King might possibly have saved his Crown and his life. Unfortunately, the Marquis de La Fayette shewed himself to be the enemy of Dumouriez, whereupon the General informed Louis XVI. that it would be useless to retain him as the nucleus of a new Ministry which would be powerless.

Accordingly, early in June, 1792, Dumouriez followed the rest of his colleagues into retirement, one which for the Rolands was, however, of but short duration. For after the invasion of the Tuileries by the angry people on June 20th, when the King refused to withdraw his veto in spite of their furious menaces, it was evident that Louis XVI. would soon be deprived of all power even as

a Constitutional Monarch. On the following tenth of August, when the mob attacked the Tuileries and the King was made a prisoner, after with his family seeking refuge in the Legislative Assembly, this body restored Roland to office, while associating with him the bloody Danton as Minister of Justice.

During the days of her power, while residing in the splendid house that had formerly been the property of the rich Genevese Finance Minister Necker, Madame Roland was able to shine in the position of hostess. At her board all of the Ministers would be assembled once a week, but the dinner concluded, she would make a show of withdrawing to her writing desk, from which point of vantage she was wont, however, to interpose in the conversation at whatever seemed an opportune moment.

After the fearful massacres of the beginning of September, 1792, and the calling into power of the National Convention, some of the Ministers present at this festive board ceased to be particularly agreeable to the bright-eyed and buxom hostess. The fire-breathing, bellowing Danton, for instance, whose manners are "too luxurious and voluptuous" to please Manon, and a certain Pache also, a slimy, hypocritical individual who seems to be playing his own game, which is not that which is expected of him by Ministress Roland. This Pache is a Swiss, and the second Minister of War of this clever and pretentious lady's making, but he scarcely does credit to her powers of discernment. The time will come when he will be Mayor of Paris, and leader of the Commune of Paris which declares itself " in a

state of insurrection ''—and then the deluge indeed!

In the meantime, from having been pleased with his slippery ways, Madame Roland has promoted him from his position of unpretentious clerk to that of Minister of War. It is a position which he makes use of as a robber's den, while the army is deprived of everything, and Pache is carefully cutting the ground from under the feet of the too-trusting Roland, who had accepted him blindly on his wife's recommendation. However, for some considerable time Madame Roland was able to maintain her ascendancy. Even when a miserable spy named Viard represented her and her husband as being in the secret pay of that dreaded bugbear Pitt, she appeared before the Convention in person, and, in some very plain speaking, annihilated Viard and all his works. Nor was that yellow-skinned toad, Dr. Marat, who saw traitors in everyone, able for a long time to affect her reputation for patriotism. It was, on the contrary, Marat himself who suffered from the insinuations and bitter invective which he spread broadcast, with the result that he was compelled to hide underground in his cellar and there meditate further iniquities and denunciations for use in due season.

When Madame Roland first came to Paris she had shewn very plainly that she despised the long-drawn-out indecision of all, and before long she declared boldly that she wanted a new insurrection, even civil war, by which to effect the regeneration of the French character and manners. Upon the day after the flight of the Royal family from Paris she did not hesitate, but was the first to write to all

the Provinces of France, to urge a general convocation, to decide by the simple words yes or no whether the monarchical form of Government should be allowed longer to exist. Two days later, this very energetic young woman declared boldly that Louis XVI. should be suspended, and further, as a cut at the party of the Duc d'Orléans, that no Regency was possible. By acting thus, Manon Roland placed herself even in these early days in the very vanguard of the Republic which was afterwards established. For the realisation of her destiny, the accomplishment of her plans, it was perhaps well for her that her passion for Bancal des Issarts was cut short of its fulfilment. She was thus left untrammelled to pursue her political desires and hatreds, and influence those who hesitated by her energy and example.

The man who first really gave Madame Roland her chance of distinction was Brissot, the leader of the Gironde in the Assembly of 1792, when in March of that year he carried her husband to the Ministry.

Robespierre, however, hated both the Gironde and Brissot, and, the better to satisfy his spite, lost no opportunity at the Jacobin Club of making vague insinuations against Brissot, in which the Rolands were included. Although these were so ridiculous as to include a supposed aristocratic, even monarchical, alliance between Brissot and the Rolands with La Fayette, they bore fruit later. As a matter of fact, while he became an object of distrust in Paris, La Fayette had utterly done for himself at the Court, where Marie Antoinette would rather have died than accept any assistance from his hands. For her part, Madame Roland despised his

doubtful principles, which she knew to fall short of the Republicanism which she desired.

The eternally active, but personally disinterested, Brissot paid " the sea-green " Robespierre back in his own coin. Upon one occasion, when the sentimental Jacobin leader had found fault with Condorcet, the last of the *philosophes*, who was then very ill, he took him roundly to task for his "horrible calumny."

" Who are you, to have the right to calumniate this great man? What have you done? Can you, like him, shew thirty years of assaults delivered, with our illustrious philosophers, against the throne, against superstition? Ah! if their burning genius had not revealed to them the mystery of the liberty which was their greatness, do you imagine that the tribune could resound to-day with your speeches about liberty? They are your masters, and you calumniate them while they serve the people."

Robespierre was only able to make a very feeble reply to this home thrust, but his jealous hatred of Brissot, the Rolands, and all the Gironde only waited for an opportunity of revenge.

It came at last, when Marat, who had wildly shrieked for the cutting off of two hundred and sixty thousand heads, was dragged by the Girondin party before the terrible Revolutionary Tribunal. This fearful Court, in its mockery of Justice, after a few minutes of deliberation usually sent all that appeared before it to the guillotine.

It was not so, however, with Marat, the *Montagnard*, the friend of Mayor Pache and the Commune of Paris. After he had been triumphantly acquitted, his yellow head had been smothered in

wreaths of flowers and he carried in triumph round Paris and into the Convention, then in session.

Now the Commune, declaring itself "in a state of insurrection," sent troops to overawe the Assembly. The Robespierrists did nothing to help their enemies the Girondins, but gladly now obeyed the will of the "Sovereign People." It impeached and arrested all of the members of the Gironde upon whom it could lay hands, gave orders also for the arrest of M. Roland, the Minister of the Interior. Some of the Girondin members of the Convention escaped for the time being only to perish miserably later, and among them M. Roland.

Now it was that Madame Roland behaved very bravely. For long past she had had serious fears that, the better to lower her in the public mind, she would be subjected to outrage at the hands of some of the sans-culottes. Convinced that her personal honour was in danger, she slept with a pistol under her pillow.

When the decree against her husband and some thirty other members of her party was pronounced, fearless of any dangers that she might run, Manon Roland went boldly to the Bar of the Convention and pleaded for her husband, whom she truly said would commit suicide rather than be dragged to the guillotine.

Upon that same night, the second of June, 1793, she was aroused from her sleep. Making no use of the pistol, she rose from her bed when ordered and was taken off to be imprisoned, at first in the prison of the Abbaye. For five months Manon Roland was in one prison or another, latterly in the Conciergerie, the same place of detention as that whence

her victim, Marie Antoinette, was dragged to the guillotine on the seventeenth of October.

During these five months Madame Roland was enabled to indulge to her full in her insatiable love of writing, and committed to paper her memoirs which, as we have mentioned, were saved for her by her young friend, M. Bosc, who afterwards perished on the guillotine. Bosc also it was who persuaded the woman who had done so much to hurry on the Revolution to throw away the poison which she had concealed, and to meet her end boldly and publicly, as during that Reign of Terror so many thousands of men and women had done already.

Lamartine has observed, rather spitefully: "As to Madame Roland, who inflated a vulgar husband by the breath of her feminine anger against a Court she found odious because it did not open to her upstart vanity, there was nothing really fine in her except her death."

This, which occurred at half-past five on the evening of the eighth of November, 1793, was quite as courageous as that of Louis XVI., Madame Élizabeth, and Marie Antoinette, all of whom by her action she had helped upon their journey to the scaffold. Dressed in white, with her long black hair floating down to her waist, she had appeared before the dreaded Tribunal, answered vivaciously the insulting questions of Fouquier-Tinville, replying indignantly to his aspersions upon her honour. She also wept, but recovered herself, and was quite composed when driven off in a tumbril to the guillotine with an unfortunate printer, named Lamarche, who was also to die. Arrived at the scaffold, she

asked the herculean young Sanson, the executioner, for pen, ink and paper to put down the strange thoughts rising within her bosom. Sanson, however, had no writing materials—only his axe, ropes, scissors to cut off her hair. She then paused before delivering herself into his hands, and addressed the huge Statue of Liberty overshadowing the scaffold. "Oh! Liberty, what crimes have been committed in thy name!"

Sanson and his assistants gave her no time for more. They seized Manon Roland, flung her down and strapped her to the board—placed her head through what the people called jocularly "the little window." A moment later, and that comely head was rolling in the basket of sawdust.

CHAPTER XXII

MADAME DE STAËL AND THE COMTE DE NARBONNE

Anne Louise Germaine, the daughter of the Genevan banker Jacques Necker, who by his well-meant but foolish advice to Louis XVI. to assemble the States-General was the direct and ultimate cause of the French Revolution, was certainly one of the most remarkable women who ever figured on the French stage. That is not to say that "the woman of the burning black eye, ardent of life, born at Paris in a house of sentimentality, of easy tears, of rhetoric, who from girlhood sought from lover to lover one whom she wished upon her own plane of talent," was by any means a very desirable person, or one who would have been received nowadays in any society save that of the *demi-monde*. The turbulent, ebullient creature, who, born of a plebeian father, had herself the appearance of a fish-wife or a by no means good-looking cook, and much of the manners of the former, was born with luck upon her side when she first saw the light in the year 1766.

Her German-Swiss father was immensely rich, and for a time the idol of the Parisian mob, since, as Minister of Finance, under Louis XVI., he cut

down the large pensions allotted to the hangers-on of the Court, and moreover helped the State with two millions of francs out of his own pocket. Her mother, Suzanne Curchod, a Swiss pastor's daughter, who had been a very great flirt as a girl, but who behaved with sufficient prudence after marriage, was a beautiful woman. She established a salon in Paris, to which salon everybody came who was remarkable for intellectual ideas.

While smart and lively, Madame Necker is only remarkable on account of the incident in her career during her girlhood in the Pays de Vaud by which she became associated with Gibbon, the subsequent historian of Ancient Rome. Having failed in marrying Gibbon, with whom, however, she kept up a sentimental correspondence, and while trifling with various other men, one of whom she intended to marry *faute de mieux*, Suzanne Curchod was lucky enough to fall in with Necker, who offered her everything which riches could procure. She jumped at the chance, and her marriage was a happy one. Into her salon in Paris was introduced at an early age her plump and precocious daughter of the burning eyes and amorous inclinations. While listening to and being made much of by the free-thinking *philosophes* of the day, the girl began to develop literary instincts, when her youthful vanity —a vanity which became subsequently colossal— was flattered by the good-natured praises of such men as d'Alembert, Baron Grimm or Diderot.

A love affair of a very ardent nature Mademoiselle Necker early indulged in with a Général de Guibert, a middle-aged and married rake, whose name is known as one of the lovers of Mademoiselle de

l'Espinasse. How far Guibert led Anne Louise with him in the paths of impropriety in which he delighted to wander is not apparent. As she never sought to conceal her amours, but delighted, on the contrary, to boast of them after her marriage, it is a wonder that she did not publish to the world the ardent expressions of her attachment for Guibert which were found among her papers when she died.

There was, however, no open *esclandre* in connection with the name of the gay dog of a General to prevent Mademoiselle Necker's father from marrying her to a nobleman of great personal charm and distinction, and handsome appearance. This was, the Swedish Ambassador in Paris, the Baron de Staël-Holstein.

The marriage was purely one of calculation on both sides, especially as the Baron was in need of money, and plenty of it. Mademoiselle Necker had previously been offered to the Swedish Count Fersen, whose attachment to Marie Antoinette prevented him from giving his name and title to the Swiss banker's daughter in return for her immense dowry. Fersen, however, suggested his friend and compatriot, Staël-Holstein, and, after a great deal of haggling on the part of Necker, he handed his daughter to this nobleman while she was still under twenty years of age.

The marriage took place early in 1786, and at the time of its celebration the bride was already writing novels of which the *motif* was the love of young married women for men who were not their husbands.

While being now able to start a brilliant salon of her own, the young Baroness de Staël disregarded

her husband from the first in the most barefaced manner. One of her lovers was, that lover of every woman from Princess to parlourmaid, Talleyrand, then Bishop of Autun. Another was a certain Mathieu de Montmorency, with whom she maintained friendly—perhaps loverly—relations for so long as she lived. There may have been many other temporary liaisons, as the voluptuous young woman never sought to restrain her passionate nature from the satisfaction of her momentary fancy, and fidelity was never her forte. While she would, for instance, be calling upon the world at large as witness to the cruel behaviour of Benjamin Constant, while, with bosom all bare and black tresses trailing around her, she would in the presence of various relatives throw herself on her back upon a staircase shrieking about Benjamin's inconstancy, Madame de Staël would be arranging to go off to Italy with another man!

She was, indeed, one of the greatest lovers that ever lived, but, as she herself said, she loved more than she was loved. The reason of this was that she tired her lovers by the volubility of her talk, the ardour of her reproaches, while at the same time demanding too much from them and yet playing them false.

One of the early characteristics of Madame de Staël was the desire to cut a great figure in the world. She wished her name to be in everybody's mouth. With this object in view, she became not only a literary woman but a political woman, above all a Revolutionary woman at a time when Revolution was in the air and popular. While she very soon succeeded in

getting herself talked about, she never became the real leader of any party. Yet her salon was the meeting-place of all parties except the Royalist party, although many nobles were among its *habitués*. Her rôle was rather that of posing as the protector of some man of note for his cleverness, brilliancy, or handsome appearance. Of such, while yet a mere girl, Madame de Staël loved to display herself as the foster-mother, leading about her protégé of the movement—who was always a lover—attached to her apron strings.

In this manner for a period she led about the subtle Abbé, who became later Prince, de Talleyrand, who was, no doubt, laughing at her all the time, but perfectly willing to accept her services. He did not in the least mind her writing State papers or speeches for him to deliver, nor resent in the least her telling everybody that she did so, if only she could procure for him a good and lucrative billet in the Government of the day.

This she was able to do by her wealth, her determination, her absolute lack of modesty, her insistance upon having her own way no matter how she obtained it. When General Barras was at the head of the Directory, she simply rushed at him about Talleyrand-Périgord. "My God, Barras! can you not see that you must do something for Talleyrand? You must make him Minister of Foreign Affairs or the poor fellow will commit suicide. I tell you we shall both be ruined, and everyone else too, if you do not instantly make that dear Tallyrand a Minister of State of some sort, and then what will you say to me about it? But I shall not leave you until you promise me."

Barras is very humorous about it all in his memoirs, intimating that there was nothing that the emphatic young lady would not give him—even herself—to get her own way. But he adds, slyly: " I swear, however, that I never so much as knew if Madame de Staël was a man or a woman."

For such a very feminine woman where the passions were concerned, Anne Louise was indeed far too mannish in other ways, and often reproached with so being. Even her one-time lover Talleyrand could not help having a cut at her upon that account, in an epigram which was much appreciated.

In her novel " Delphine," one of the female characters was palpably Talleyrand travestied in woman's attire, while the author herself was, of course, her own heroine. Thereupon Talleyrand wittily said: " I hear that Madame de Staël has got us both in her book, and both disguised as women."

The young married woman succeeded more nearly in assuming a leading political rôle at the end of the year 1791, than at any other period in her career.

She had then been married nearly six years, and was the mother of one boy, Auguste by name, born upwards of five years after marriage. In spite of the glaring immorality of his wife, the Baron de Staël did not refuse to accept the title to the paternity of Auguste any more than he did later to that of Madame de Staël's second son, Albert, or her daughter, Albertine, of whom there would seem to be little doubt that Benjamin Constant was the father. The handsome, agreeable Baron, who had been as popular at the Court before the Revolution took place in 1789 as his *bourgeoise* wife was not,

had, in the face of his wife's immorality, taken his own line. While maintaining an intimacy with Mademoiselle Clairon, an actress of talent, when Madame de Staël brought any child into the world he considered it a favourable opportunity to ask her rich father Necker to pay his debts. As the Baron indulged freely in gambling, these were often very large, and although Necker paid, he always vowed it was to be for the last time. In order to save his daughter from the scandal of a divorce, he, however, had always in the end to provide his son-in-law with the funds that he asked for, no matter how large the amount might be.

Throughout the year 1791, the now twenty-five-year-old Madame de Staël had made no secret of the fact that she was bestowing her favours upon the dashing Comte Louis de Narbonne. He was a man of extremely attractive personality, and famous on account of the rumour that he was the son of the Princess Adélaide by her father Louis XV.

Owing to this supposed disgraceful relationship to himself, Louis XVI. particularly objected to Narbonne, especially as he made a show of being attached to those Revolutionary principles by the result of which the unfortunate King was at this time practically a prisoner at the Tuileries, while nominally a Constitutional Monarch.

Constitutional King he might be, but, none the less, both Louis and Marie Antoinette regarded the members of the Feuillants Club, which was the stronghold of Constitutionalism, with greater antipathy than even the Republican Jacobins. This hatred had been recently shewn, when the influence of the Queen with all the voters of the Royalist

faction had been sufficient to bring about the defeat for the position of Mayor of Paris of the Feuillant La Fayette.

Madame de Staël, who posed as the ardent admirer of the English Constitution, was closely connected with La Fayette and the Feuillants. She proposed to them in December, 1791, her lover, the Comte de Narbonne, for the position of Minister of War, when, in spite of the antagonism of the party of Robespierre and the Jacobins, the Feuillants were strong enough to impose Narbonne upon the King.

So much was the influence of the Swedish Ambassadress in the matter recognised, that the Ministry of which the Comte Louis was a member was known as the Ministry of Madame de Staël, as that which succeeded it was called the Ministry of Madame Roland. Madame de Staël, always bubbling over with the enthusiasm which she preached so loudly, was for ever in search of a hero, and at a moment when war seemed likely to break out between France and Austria and Prussia allied, this hero she thought she had discovered in Narbonne. He was described as roué, brave, and *spirituel*, and she imagined that, dominated by her own vast store of superabundant energy, she would compel him to do wonders towards the reorganisation of the French army, which had fallen to pieces since the abolition of despotic rule.

The grand-daughter of a German who had settled in Switzerland, the daughter of a Swiss mother, the wife of a Swedish nobleman, Madame de Staël was often reproached with belonging to no country, having no real fatherland. Although she herself felt deeply this disability, she gave her heart to Paris, while her ideal was the establishment of

" Liberty " in France upon an English model. It was not an ideal which was tolerated for nearly so long as was the woman in whose brain it originated. Unfortunately for Madame de Staël, her vanity had to suffer upon one point. She was not beautiful. A French contemporary writer describes her as " having coarse features, particularly the nose. Her waist was rather thick, her skin of a middling attractive quality. Her gestures were rather energetic than gracious; standing up before a fireplace with her hands behind her back, she dominated a salon in a virile attitude with a powerful speech, which contrasted strongly with the tone of her sex, and at times caused one to doubt if she were a woman. With all this she was only twenty-five, had very fine arms, a fine Juno-like neck, and magnificent black hair, falling in tempestuous ringlets, which gave a fine effect to her bust and even made her features appear more delicate, less mannish."

A description of her twenty years later is given by the Comtesse de Boigne, who met her in Switzerland. " At first she seemed to me ugly and ridiculous. A big red face, a complexion by no means fresh, and her hair arranged in a manner which she called picturesque, in other words, badly done; no fichu, a white muslin blouse cut very low, arms and shoulders bare, no shawl, scarf, or veil of any kind —such was the strange apparition which appeared in an hotel room at mid-day. She held a small twig, which she was constantly twiddling in her fingers, with the object, I think, of showing off a very beautiful hand."

Upon one point we find all those who knew

Madame de Staël to agree—her eyes. We find one writer saying of them that they were " unique eyes, black and inundated with flames, radiant with genius, goodness, and all the passions. But let us withdraw this word of genius; we reserve this sacred word. Madame de Staël had in reality a great, an immense talent, and of which the source was the heart. Profound *naïveté* and great invention, these two salient traits of genius, were never to be found in her."

Of the use to which Necker's daughter was wont to make of her wonderful eyes we find an example in the remarks of the observant Morris, who was the American Minister in Paris, when she was indulging herself at the same time in an amour with Talleyrand and her liaison with Narbonne. He says that he finds her looking at him with " the leer of invitation." Morris appears to have been able to resist her charms, however, and at the same time to have been much impressed by the love shewn by the Baron de Staël for his wife, and his bitter remarks concerning the corrupt nature of the hearts and minds of the women of the day in France.

If the unfortunate Staël-Holstein was for a year or two foolish enough to waste his affections upon a woman who was openly and heartlessly unfaithful to him, he learned, as we have seen, to console himself with her money, his actresses, and the gaming table.

Had Madame de Staël had but the decency, however, to shew but a little respect for the Swedish Ambassador and the rank to which he had raised a *bourgeoise* like herself, she might well, with " the talents " which she openly boasted that she

possessed, have found the means to make his home life a happy one, and not driven him to pursuits unworthy of a character which all have described as loveable.

Had she not been too selfish, Madame de Staël might still have posed, written, boasted and enjoyed all those successes of the world for which she so continually craved, and without openly disgracing her husband's name, even if from the first she had determined not to love him. She disgraced, however, both his name and her own most effectually by her conduct with the Comte de Narbonne.

No sooner was he appointed War Minister than he was requested to go for a tour of inspection of the fortresses of the east and north of France. Then, absolutely regardless of public opinion, the wife of the Swedish Ambassador left her Embassy in Paris and installed herself by her lover's side in the coach in which he drove from fortress to fortress. A pretty spectacle truly for all the officers in the garrisons visited by the Minister of War—the country people and the *bourgeoisie* in the towns that this pretty pair of lovers passed through and stayed at together en route.

Madame de Staël posed as being of the people, of the Revolution, yet, deserting her husband's bed, here she was to be seen driving about and openly leading an adulterous life with an aristocrat who was supposed to be performing a most arduous duty for the benefit of his country in a time of danger. As a matter of fact, Narbonne performed this duty very badly. He returned to Paris with most re-assuring but absolutely false reports about the conditions of the forts and the military stores in the places which

he had visited, all of which was discovered later when war broke out, and greatly to the disadvantage of France.

In March of the following year, 1792, the Staël Ministry came to an end, but not until Narbonne had made a very eloquent speech before the National Assembly, one which was supposed to have been written for him by Madame de Staël in the same way as she composed a State paper for Talleyrand. After having given a splendid picture of the military situation, and greatly exaggerated the numbers of troops available, he made some remarks which cut at Robespierre, who for his own personal reasons had been endeavouring to discourage the public mind by over-estimating the dangers to France in the event of a war which he sought to avert.

Narbonne observed: " A nation which longs for liberty would have no sentiment of its strength were it to give itself over to terror concerning the intentions of certain individuals. When the general will is as strongly pronounced as it is in France, to stay its effect is in the power of no one. Were confidence even an act of courage, it would import to the people as to private individuals to believe in the prudence of boldness."

After various political events which do not concern us here, first Delessart, Narbonne's colleague in the Ministry, was attacked in the Assembly, and then he himself a few days later.

After Comte Louis de Narbonne had made an attempt to suppress the National Guard of the city of Marseilles, on account of its having disarmed a loyal regiment of Swiss at Aix-les-Bains, the end came. He became most unpopular, and was howled

at in the Assembly, after which he and his colleagues tendered their resignation, which was accepted by the King at the end of March, 1792.

By that time the number of the nobles left in France had been very greatly reduced, the tide of emigration having continued to flow faster and faster ever since the end of 1789.

Narbonne, however, still remained in France, and Madame de Staël also, trusting to the ægis of the Swedish Embassy, where she continued lavishly to entertain such persons of note as were still left in Paris and would visit her. For the daughter of Necker was always a snob, and ran after all the *grands seigneurs* whom, with her loudly-paraded Revolutionary principles, she pretended to decry. Although not of the *noblesse* herself, she loved the nobility, and especially admired the nobility of aristocratic England. Among those who comment upon this weakness of the Baroness de Staël is Madame de Boigne, who observes: " There was no greater slave to the most foolish aristocratical ideas than Madame de Staël, with all her liberalism."

The Baron de Staël-Holstein, whose master, Gustavus III. of Sweden, was planning to head the European troops about to attack Revolutionary France, had wisely taken his departure for Holland, but, trusting to her proclaimed sympathy with the popular cause, his wife stayed in Paris. The disturbances in Paris were gradually increasing all through that year of 1792, and aristocrats and " suspects " were being seized and thrust into prison wholesale, from which but few issued save to be led to the place of execution. Among those then sought for was the Comte de Narbonne, against

whom the people had turned, and for whose blood they were now eager.

Madame de Staël then concealed her lover in the Swedish Embassy, and was clever enough to get him out of Paris in disguise and off to England with a passport in an assumed name. She displayed considerable courage at this time, but after contriving to rescue the Comte de Lally from the clutches of the mob, she was herself thrust into prison. She was there in the beginning of September, but on the day preceding the commencement of the fearful September massacres, during which almost all the occupants of all the prisons in Paris were indiscriminately slaughtered, no matter for what cause they were confined, Madame de Staël had the good luck to be rescued. She was then saved from death by Manuel, the Procureur de la Commune, one of the leading officials of the Municipality. Manuel, with Pétion, wearing their tricolour scarves of office, went to the prisons to endeavour to prevent the slaughter, and saved a few of the prisoners from their brother Municipals, who were inciting the slaughter, which began on September 3rd. It was on the evening previous that Manuel saved Madame de Staël. It was not on account of her personal popularity that Manuel rescued the young woman who had already made herself so conspicuous, but when she declared to him that she was enceinte that the Procureur de la Commune ordered her release. She then contrived to quit Paris in her carriage, although surrounded by a howling mob, from whom she was protected by the brewer Santerre, one of the greatest ruffians in Paris, who had become the Commandant of the National Guard.

While the merciful Manuel was eventually guillotined for the kindness shewn by him to the Royal Family, and Pétion was devoured when in flight by wolves or wild dogs, Madame de Staël contrived to escape from any further dangers at the hands of the men to whom she had preached her principles of liberty and enthusiasm.

She reached Switzerland in safety, and although her father Necker had by this time fled from his country house of Coppet on the Lake of Geneva, where he feared arrest at the hands of Frenchmen, she found him with her mother at a place called Rolle. At this place she stayed for some time, but after the birth of her second boy, who was christened Albert, she began to pine for her lover, the Comte de Narbonne, and, in spite of the efforts of her mother to arouse in her a sense of decency, determined to join him in England. By the end of the year she was accordingly staying at a house at Mickleham in Surrey with Narbonne and some other *émigrés*, but before very long Comte Louis shewed Madame de Staël so plainly that he was tired of her demonstrative affection that she left him in despair and returned to Geneva. She had hardly done grieving for the ungrateful Narbonne before she was in love again. For had she not already written than " Love is a woman's whole existence "!

CHAPTER XXIII

MADAME DE STAËL AND BENJAMIN CONSTANT

A STRANGE thing about Madame de Staël was her naïve custom of introducing her own individual feelings, her own passionate longings or active dislikes, into whatever kind of a book she might write. It might nominally be one written about matters concerning the public welfare, or a mere romance of fiction—it was always the same. She might write a novel and call it " Delphine," another and name it " Corinne," a book about Germany or a treatise with the lengthy title " Concerning the Influence of the Passions upon the Happiness of Individuals and Nations." Constantly we find the author's personal feelings the keynote of them all.

It was in the last-named treatise that she let herself go, full swing, upon the subject of the illtreatment of women by men, and was no doubt thinking of her recent rupture with Comte Louis de Narbonne when she expressed herself in almost identical terms with the well-known couplet: " Man's love is of man's life a thing apart—'tis woman's whole existence." Madame de Staël declared that " love is a woman's whole existence, but only an episode in

the lives of men." And then she proceeded to dilate at length to the effect that "reputation, honour, esteem depend upon how a woman conducts herself, while, according to the unjust rules of the world, the laws of morality itself are waived in the relations of men with women." She continues for long on the same theme, adding: "They may pass as good men although they have caused women the greatest suffering that it is possible for one human being to inflict upon another. They may be regarded as loyal although they have betrayed them."

And so her facile pen runs on, *ad libitum*, and yet the odd thing is that all that Madame de Staël has to say in this treatise about men—for which we may read Narbonne—applies equally to herself, to her own cruel treatment of her deserted husband, her own indulgence in her momentary passion for one man while vowing to another that she adores him above everything in heaven or earth.

Whatever it was that Narbonne did to the wife of the Swedish Ambassador, to cause her thus to declaim so bitterly against the male sex as a whole, it is evident that his offence was by no means past forgiveness. For during the year after her return from England to Switzerland, which was that of the Reign of Terror, she actually had Narbonne to stay with her in disguise at a place called Nyon. She also asked Talleyrand to come and join her, but as Switzerland refused to admit him, he was unable to rejoin the ardent lady, therefore he went off instead to the United States. Her friend Mathieu de Montmorency was with her for several months, while she also gave shelter to several

other *émigrés* in whom she had no particular interest, or if she had it was not known.

Anne Louise was the better able to do as she chose at this epoch, as her mother, who had endeavoured to curb her daughter's libertine behaviour, died, while her father, good, easy man, who adored Madame de Staël as she him, never made any fuss on the subject of her amours. Until the end of the year 1794 she was not able to indulge in her polyandrous customs under his roof in the large and comfortable Château of Coppet on the Lake of Geneva, as Jacques Necker continued to fear being kidnapped if at Coppet, and haled off to Paris and the guillotine. She would, however, appear to have been with her father at Lausanne when she met the man who was the object of her most unrestrained passion, one, too, with whom for many years she indulged in the most frantic and stormy scenes of which a woman could be capable. They were scenes which, from Madame de Staël's lack of self-restraint, often took place in the presence of witnesses; thus they not only made her lover wretched, indeed, drove him to despair because he could not sever his connection with her, but made the name of this famous woman a laughing stock from one end of Europe to another. Nothing, for instance, used to amuse Napoleon more during the long continuance of Madame de Staël's hostile attitude towards him than to read the wild torrents of reproaches which she used to pour upon her unfortunate lover through the post, which letters, having been opened and copied, were brought to the Emperor by his Minister of Police.

The young gentleman of whom so much was to be

heard in connection with Madame de Staël was one possessed of no particular morals, but of intellectual attainments quite on a par with, if not superior to, those of the wife of the Swedish Ambassador. He came of an old French noble family settled in Switzerland, his name was Benjamin Constant de Rebecque, and he was about two years the senior of the woman who gave him many a *mauvais quart d'heure*.

Although Benjamin Constant, who was famous as a man of letters, had scoffed scornfully at the style of Madame de Staël's treatises, declaring that "they were only fit to spit upon," he it was who eventually sought her out and made her acquaintance without even going through the formality of an introduction. He had, after a liaison with a married woman much older than himself—a Madame de Charrière—been married at the Court of Brunswick, where also he divorced his wife, who was both ugly and unfaithful.

Leaving his post under the Duke of Brunswick, this brilliant young man of a contemplative nature, who had been educated, among other universities, at Edinburgh, wandered to Lausanne. Having nothing better to do, he thought he would make the acquaintance of the woman whose principal object in life seemed to be to get herself talked about—some of his friends knew her and said that she was interesting. Seeing Madame de Staël driving, Benjamin held up his hand and stopped her carriage. Whatever he said to the occupant of the carriage evidently pleased that young lady, as she asked M. Constant to take a seat, drove him about and took him home with her.

The adventurous Benjamin kept two diaries, one of which, called his "Carnet," was written in ordinary French, while the other, his "Journal Intime," was kept in Greek characters. Between them they give a wonderful revelation of the man, the latter especially; while revealing all his innermost thoughts, and expressing his discontent with himself, his mode of life and bondage to Madame de Staël, the "Journal Intime" is also full of witty epigrams.

Soon after his first meeting with Necker's daughter, Constant mentions how he has dashed his watch upon the floor, because upon looking at it he found that the minute hand had passed the hour of midnight, at which time she insisted that he must leave her to prevent scandal. Poor Benjamin! many a time subsequently we find him complaining that he cannot bear to be kept up late, that he must really break with Madame de Staël and get him a wife, in order that he may be able to go to bed early! The irony of the thing was that when eventually he did marry again, his wife never went to bed until the small hours, to his infinite disgust, as disclosed in pathetic language.

However, that he did not mind sitting up after twelve o'clock when first he became attracted by the charms of the literary Anne Louise is evident by the remark in his journal written the day after his next visit to her. It is jubilant in tone: "I have not bought another watch. I no longer require one!"

For fifteen years after he thus records that he no longer has need for a watch, Benjamin Constant put

up with the whims and caprices of Madame de Staël, broke with her, found that he could not do without her any more than she could without him, and made it up again.

They were both frequently unfaithful to each other, and Benjamin even married secretly during that period, while not daring to declare his marriage to the fair Charlotte (who had urged him to carry her off without matrimony in her youth) for fear of the fury of his mistress. The fury came in due course, and there was plenty of it, with the result that poor Charlotte had to be sent off from time to time while Madame de Staël retained Benjamin at Coppet.

During his long period of love, intellectual intercourse, literature, travel, social distinction, political intrigue and disgust in the company of Madame de Staël, the one link which stood all the storm and the stress when all else were rotten was Benjamin's affection for his daughter, Albertine de Staël, who eventually married the Duc de Broglie. She was born when he had been the lover of the wife of Baron de Staël-Holstein for three years, and when he was already writing: "I am isolated without being independent, subjugated without being united."

During all of these long years, while Constant and Madame de Staël were looked upon in the world of French society and politics as having but one mind, of which her share was the stronger, they were yet continually at variance.

Nevertheless, Benjamin was always ready to put himself out for his variable mistress, to do his utmost for her in Paris when Napoleon forbade her

approach, to run half over Europe at her request, or, giving up all his own plans, to fly back to her side when, as upon the occasion of her father's death, she was in dire distress.

The Baron de Staël divorced his wife in the year after the birth of Albertine. This little contretemps had not the slightest effect upon the life of his spouse, who continued to run backwards and forwards from Coppet to Paris with Benjamin, give enormous entertainments, frequently theatrical representations for which she wrote the plays and would take the heroine's part, write books, go to balls, and generally keep herself prominently before the world.

M. de Staël died not very long after his separation from his wife, and she was present with him at the last, after which she continued her life as usual. In an interlude while Benjamin was away from her, the widowed Baroness found time to fall in love with another well known man of letters. He was M. Camille Jordan, and, anxious to indulge her new passion, she instantly invited him to go for a trip with her to Italy. That she was rather afraid of Constant hearing of this liaison, however, which he did in due course, is evident from the way in which she wrote to Camille. " I have got money enough to arrange for you to make an agreeable journey without any expense to yourself. Benjamin will be in Paris all the winter." Madame de Staël goes on by telling Jordan to keep her invitation a strict secret, as she does not wish the plan which she has at heart to *cool the affection of her other friends*.

As the years go on, and after Napoleon has

ordered Madame de Staël to remain in her house at Coppet, the time comes when she is not so contented at Benjamin's absence. Upon one occasion, shortly after Constant and his wife had timorously confessed their marriage to her, she sends for him and he delays in coming. Thereupon, she sends her sons, of whom the eldest, Auguste, is now nineteen, to bring him by force back to her side, and when he demurs they furiously challenge him to fight. Rather than shed the blood of these boys, whom he has known from infancy, Constant leaves his wife and returns to Coppet, where his arbitrary mistress makes him remain with her for several months.

Before his second marriage, Benjamin had loyally given Madame de Staël the opportunity of becoming his wife, but as she insisted upon keeping her own name, by which she was so well known, he refused to marry her upon those terms. Her subsequent lover, the young officer Jean de Rocca (always called John), who was twenty-three years Madame de Staël's junior, acceded to these disgraceful terms, and they were secretly married. Rocca also challenged Benjamin to a duel, but he refused to fight about a woman for whom he had at last nothing but indifference. Although she had a child by Rocca, she still hankered after Constant, and we frequently find her writing to urge his return to her, while saying that Rocca knows how to behave himself now, and will not resent his presence in the least.

It was indeed a despicable part which not only did Madame de Staël enact herself, but also compel the foolish young Rocca to perform. She dragged him

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after her to no less than four European Courts, those of Austria, Russia, Sweden and England, introducing him everywhere as her mere lover when he was really her husband. The wonder is that she was received by all the great people of the day, including various Kings, Queens, and Emperors. Only at Vienna, however, does this extraordinary woman, who made her own code of morality, seem to have received a hint that she would do well to keep her Rocca in the background, and not always bring him in her train into exalted society.

The experiences which Madame de Staël's lovers were compelled to undergo were certainly as a rule scarcely conducive to the continuation of love, and one begins to understand after reading Constant's "Journal Intime" the reasons why Narbonne found that he had had enough of that tempestuous lady after a short time with her at Mickleham. One of the most extraordinary scenes is depicted in a letter from Benjamin's cousin, Rosalie de Constant. He had come to her and his aunt, Madame de Nassau, in the depths of despair—he did not want to go again to Coppet, but did not know how to resist as Madame de Staël would not consent to his breaking off their relations. He had not yet married Charlotte de Hardenberg, so these ladies persuaded Benjamin to go and have the matter out like a man once for all—to offer Madame de Staël marriage once more or a *séparation à l'aimable*.

He went—when Madame de Staël's reply was to assemble her sons, her daughter, and their instructor, and in a measure her own, the German savant Schlegel. In their presence she denounced

Benjamin. "There," said she, "stands the man who obliges me to choose between despair and the necessity of compromising your existence and your fortune"!

Then she threw herself on the ground screaming, tied a handkerchief round her neck and pretended to strangle herself. He was melted and spoke affectionately, but the following morning poor Benjamin fled from the scene, rode back at a gallop to his aunt and cousin, and arrived, figuratively speaking, a perfect rag.

Scarcely had he arrived than screams were heard in the hall below. Madame de Staël had followed the fugitive, who was at once hidden in a room where he was told to stay.

The screams becoming louder, his cousin, Rosalie, went out, to find the talented lady "on her back on the stairs, with her bosom bare and her dishevelled locks sweeping the steps. 'Where is he?' she screams. 'I must find him again!'"

Presently her agonising screams bring Benjamin out from his hiding place, for he can stand them no longer. "She runs to him, throws herself into his arms, and then falls on the floor again, uttering the most bitter reproaches."

After this frantic scene Madame de Staël bore the subdued Benjamin away with her a prisoner, and kept him at Coppet for six weeks!

It was after his release that he went off and secretly married Charlotte de Hardenberg, a lady who since in her girlhood she had blandly asked him to carry her off, had been twice married and twice divorced. The last divorce, it is only fair to state, she pur-

chased from her husband in order to marry Constant, who found the funds for the bargain.

With Charlotte, Benjamin was happy on the whole, for she was an amiable creature in every sense of the word. But, alas! she was not brilliant, and he, therefore, often found himself longing once more for the tempestuous Madame de Staël, who attracted him by her intellectual gifts. If, therefore, she continued to make him suffer for some years to come, Benjamin had chiefly himself to thank.

CHAPTER XXIV

MADAME DE STAËL AND BONAPARTE

Madame de Stael wrote two works in which she arranged herself for the public gaze in the attitude in which she wished to figure before posterity. These were " Dix années d'Exil " and " Considérations sur la Révolution française." In these, while weeping for liberty and humanity overthrown by him, she poses as having seen through Napoleon from the first, discovered his real nature, what he would become and what he would do.

Since even Napoleon himself dressed up his memoirs written during his captivity at Saint Helena in a way to falsify history, we may surely pardon the vanity of the woman who posed as always having been the opponent of the man who was at once the greatest conqueror and administrator that the world had ever produced.

While she has concealed all her own petty spite and intrigue under a cloak of interest in the welfare of humanity at large, those who lived in her day had, however, the real facts before them, with the result that posterity has been enabled to judge for itself as to the respective parts played by the protagonists in a prolonged struggle which the weaker of the twain has represented as a duel between equals.

Whether it were in effect a mere struggle in which one of the antagonists possessed neither the brain power nor the strength of the other, or a duel in which the combatants fought with rapiers of equal steel and sharpness matters but little—the contest which many have sought too greatly to minimise was not without results far greater than has been generally recognised.

It began in the disappointed vanity of a woman whose advances were repelled, one who would willingly have given herself to the hero whom at the outset she worshipped, but over whom in return she sought to dominate so that all the world might see, and his glory become but the reflection of her own.

While the Directory, which had given to young Bonaparte his first command, was controlling the destiny of France, this Corsican officer, of the age of twenty-six, had taken the bit between his teeth completely. After defeating the allied Piedmontese and Austrian armies repeatedly in Italy, capturing Milan, Verona, and Mantua, and even commencing to march on Vienna, he had ventured to treat upon his own account and without reference to the five Directors in Paris with the allied States that he had crushed. He first accorded terms to Charles Emanuel IV., the ruler of Savoy, Piedmont and Sardinia, and then granted peace upon humiliating terms to Francis II., Emperor of Germany, Archduke of Austria and King of Hungary.

After having also taken possession of the Venetian territories, with the treaty of Campo Formio in his pocket, General Bonaparte returned to France. When, upon the fifth of December, 1797, he made his appearance in Paris, the young hero was a per-

sonage far too powerful for his masters in the Directory to meddle with, for by his triumphs he had secured the weight of France at his back. The Conquerer played at being humble. He sent to ask Talleyrand, then Minister of External Relations, when he would be pleased to receive him. Talleyrand sent for his *chère amie*, Madame de Staël, to be with him when he received the marvellous young victor of Austria, the hero of Italy.

She was already in love with him, or his reputation, and had repeatedly written to Bonaparte, with whose brothers, Lucien and Joseph, she was on very good terms. One of these letters was in the worst of taste, for in it she depreciated his wife, the flirtatious Josephine Beauharnais, telling Bonaparte that "to unite his genius to a little insignificant creole of that nature was nothing short of a monstrosity, since she could never appreciate him." Although Madame de Staël had distinctly hit the right nail on the head, Bonaparte perfectly understood the allusion that there was another woman who could both appreciate and understand him—lead him as well.

He was, therefore, on his guard from the first, for he had already heard sufficient of Madame de Staël to be able to take her measure, and had no intention of being run by any ambitious woman, now that he had earned his own laurels.

General Bonaparte was pale and tired looking when he entered Talleyrand's salon, and when the Minister presented Necker's daughter, merely greeted her with a civil word or two, to the effect that he had been sorry not to find her father at Coppet on his way across Switzerland. About her-

self nothing! Nevertheless, she felt " as if stifled, oppressed by the emotion caused her by his presence."

That lovely coquette, Madame Récamier, and la Staël went together to the grand reception in which, a few days later, the Directors, dressed as Roman Senators, received their youthful servitor so soon to become their master.

He was received in a style befitting his glory, with bands of music and an ode by Chénier chanted in his honour. In the general enthusiasm, Madame de Staël also found herself affected. She was carried away by this man whom she had marked out for her own.

She now commenced to harry the young General by her ardent pursuit; everywhere he went she pursued him with her adoration; at every dinner, reception or ball she was present, fixing Bonaparte with her black burning eyes. Alas! he would not respond to the warm invitation, and when she asked him to a ball at her own house, did not come.

Although fond of women, he liked them for their femininity alone, looked upon them as objects of pleasure to divert man in his hours of ease. To allow himself to be captured by a mannish, political woman, even if she had lustrous, passionate eyes, in order to be towed along in the wake of her triumphal car, and involved in her schemes, did not suit the book of the hero so confident in himself and his future. Bonaparte was, therefore, frightened at her persistent pursuit. Nevertheless, he could not avoid meeting Madame de Staël at times, especially as she was on such good terms with his elder brother, Joseph.

Upon one occasion she boldly demanded of Bonaparte whom he considered " the first woman in the world." Instead of the compliment she was fishing for, she received a pithy reply, one that would have fallen aptly from the lips of Theodore Roosevelt, when, as President of the United States, he was instructing the women of America in their evident duty to the Commonwealth.

Smiling maliciously back into the black eyes regarding him with an anxiously expectant look, Bonaparte replied " The woman who has borne the most children."

Not in the least discouraged, upon a subsequent occasion Madame de Staël asked Bonaparte bluntly: " Are you fond of women, General? " " I am fond of my wife," he answered humorously.

Still he could not get away from those black eyes. When he found them always upon him, he ceased even to respond pleasantly to their burning glances, but assumed a sphinx-like expression, and was barely polite when their owner asked him, bluntly, such questions as, if he wished to invade Switzerland, while adding, coquettishly, that she would not have him invade that country. He would, however, accept no community of interests with Madame de Staël even in jest, and, at length, giving up all hopes of subduing Bonaparte by her coquetry, she regretfully determined that she must effect his conquest in another manner, by her literary fame, her personal celebrity, which would convince him how necessary it was for a rising young man like himself to have a woman like her upon his side.

In the following year, 1798, Bonaparte went off to the conquest of Egypt, and upon his return as the

hero of the battle of the Pyramids, she beset him as closely as ever. As she praised him up everywhere to the skies, belauded his good sense and modesty in signing his proclamations " Bonaparte, Member of the National Institute," and was still evidently ready to run to him if he but extended so much as a little finger, he now relaxed a little in his severity. For he considered it injudicious to make an enemy of a woman with so much influence in the salons of Paris, where the effect of a chance word might be far-reaching.

Accordingly, Bonaparte read her book upon the Influence of the Passions, and contrived to let her know that he had done so, whereupon she was in the seventh heaven of delight. He did not, however, like the Republican principles which she, with Benjamin Constant, still professed at a time when Republicanism was rapidly becoming a thing of the past, any more than he appreciated her views upon Constitutional Government after the English pattern. For France was sick of Constitutions. One or two of them, drawn up by the clever Sieyès, had been tried during and since the reign of Louis XVI., and had been found wanting.

Nevertheless, Madame de Staël still attached herself to Sieyès, in the hopes that he would found yet another Constitution. And the ex-Abbé Sieyès was a member of the Directory, and looked upon by Bonaparte as a man who stood in his way in the ambitious schemes which he carefully concealed. Nevertheless, to hatch his new and long sat upon Constitution, Sieyès made the mistake of imagining that he could make use of a bold soldier who, the cause of Liberty once advanced by his aid, would be

prepared to sink back gracefully into retirement.

Benjamin Constant, Rœderer, Madame de Staël, and a dozen others, of whom the chief was Lucien Bonaparte, thought the same thing. The result was a temporary alliance between Sieyès and Bonaparte and the famous coup d'État of the Eighteenth Brumaire (9th November, 1799). This left Bonaparte at the top of the tree as First Consul, while Sieyès it was who sunk gracefully into oblivion with his projected Constitution.

At the age of thirty, General Bonaparte had thus suddenly jumped to the head of the State, and Madame de Staël, who was three years his senior, commenced at once to trouble his repose. For she could not help buzzing about like a bee from salon to salon, while raising everywhere the question as to whether it would be yet possible to preserve the principles of the Revolution. Constantly she chattered of Liberty. Public opinion in general was weary of the Revolution and its principles, its talk about Liberty, which had only brought thousands of those who supported it to the guillotine. The nation at large only longed for a cessation from slaughter and disorder, for a fixed Government, no matter of what nature, which would make regular life possible, enact laws with some sense in them, and enable people to live in peace.

But while the people of France thus wanted peace, even if it might be under a dictator, Madame de Staël continued to cry out with a few of her friends, notably Constant, for the principles which were considered by most as superannuated. In fact, she was greedy of Government, and wished to assert herself—was inclined to fancy that by her

constant agitations she could compel the First Consul to rule in the way that seemed advisable to the daughter of Jacques Necker.

At first Bonaparte imagined that he could stop these unseasonable buzzings by holding out to her the hope of the repayment of the two million livres which Necker had lent to the State many years previously. It was true that, as an *émigré* whose name had not yet been regularly erased from the rolls of the emigration, the State was obliged to pay him nothing, his goods having been forfeited. Joseph Bonaparte came to talk the matter over with the fair de Staël, and said that his brother would order the payment of the money. She wanted the return of the two millions badly it is true, but she gave herself airs, said that that was not the question of the moment, but her principles, her thoughts.

While all seemed to be satisfied, while everyone else was loudly approving of the action by which Bonaparte had assumed the reins of State, he was *froissé* to find this one woman at once commencing to criticise him, his actions, his methods. Madame de Staël had applauded with the rest after the Eighteenth Brumaire, why should she, therefore, now stir up the salons with her interminable talk?

The friendly Joseph Bonaparte could not persuade the irritating woman to hold her tongue, the fact being that she was angry with the First Consul for not having responded to her advances, and was determined to make him feel it. Worried by her into so doing, and against his own better judgment, Benjamin Constant was now guilty of an act of ingratitude to Bonaparte, making in the Tribunal of State, to which, although a Swiss, he had been

appointed by the First Consul, an eloquent and sarcastic speech which struck strongly at his individual rule. He ended by claiming for the Tribunal " an independence without which there would be only servitude and silence—a silence which all Europe would understand." Constant had warned Madame de Staël what the result would be. He had said: " To-day your salon is crowded with everybody worth knowing. If I speak as you wish, to-morrow it will be empty."

Benjamin was right. While everyone named Madame de Staël as the real author of Constant's ill-timed speech, even her oldest friends, such as Talleyrand, refused her invitations. The rebuff which she met with was crushing. Bonaparte was naturally angry, and caused Madame de Staël to be attacked in the official press, which she was in some very amusingly satirical articles which did not hesitate to name her as the person who had inspired Constant. The Royalist and the Jacobin Press abused her equally and more bitterly.

The latter addressed Madame de Staël as follows: " It is not your fault if you are ugly, but it is your fault if you are an *intrigante*. Correct yourself promptly, for your reign is not of this world. You know the road to Switzerland; try another journey there if you do not wish ill to befall you. I have judged you, I have judged your talents. It is since you came that everything has gone wrong. Take off your Benjamin! Let him try his talents in the Swiss Senate and be careful not to come and trouble a people which is weary of his manœuvres and of yours."

The sarcasm of the Royalist journals was particu-

larly amusing: " Benjamin shall be Consul. I will give the Ministry of Finance to Papa. My husband shall have an Embassy a long way off. As for myself, I will have the inspection of everything, and, above all, I will rule the Institute."

Poor M. de Staël! One cannot help feeling sorry for him, with a wife who brought such ridicule upon his name! In her desire for glory, her passion for being talked about, Madame de Staël had let Benjamin loose. Above all, she imagined, simply enough, that Bonaparte would be afraid of her, and, in consequence, allow her to lead him, make him govern according to her wishes.

She was undeceived when Fouché, the Minister of Police, sent for her and told her very politely, for he preferred politeness when possible, that she would do well to leave Paris for a time for her country place of Saint-Ouen.

This was Madame de Staël's first " exile," and not of lengthy duration, but upon her return to Paris, nothing improved, she ran after the First Consul once more as madly as ever. She begged Talleyrand to let her come to a ball at which Bonaparte was to be present—he was obliged to refuse. She obtained, by asking for it, an invitation to the house of a great lady where he, his wife Josephine, and his sister Caroline, afterwards Queen of Naples, were to be. She got her invitation, but they none of them put in an appearance. Snubbing after snubbing Madame de Staël received; even Joseph Bonaparte for a time refused to visit her, and she became at length somewhat discouraged.

This did not prevent her from trying to speak to Bonaparte upon the doorstep of the Tuileries when

he was formally taking possession of the palace. The First Consul, however, passed in without appearing to notice Madame de Staël.

The National Institute was the centre of the scientific and literary world, the home of such of the party of *Philosophes* as had not had their heads cut off in the Revolution which they, with Jean Jacques Rousseau, had been the first to promote.

Received as a member, Bonaparte had signed his proclamations " Member of the Institute," and thus thrown sand into people's eyes. When he became First Consul, those of the Institute, really the faction of Madame de Staël, imagined that they could become a strong party in the State, a party with the principles of humanity, justice, freedom of thought and speech, freedom of religion, and, above all, Constitutional Liberty and Individual Liberty inscribed upon their banner. To their horror, all of these modern philosophers, who went back to the first principles preached by the *Philosophes*, the *Économistes* of 1750, found their principles quietly brushed to one side as antediluvian. Far from being received with open arms by the First Consul, while Bonaparte horrified them by taking a man here from the ranks of the Jacobins, another there from the Royalists, the aristocrats, they were left out in the cold. They form a party! they lead the State or direct a policy! No chance was given to them!

On the other hand, Benjamin Constant and those who had joined him in the revolt of the Tribunal against the First Consul, found themselves being removed from their positions—the Tribunal was muzzled—where was the liberty?

Madame de Staël thought that it was time for her

to write a book to assert the rights of, to defend, this philosophical party. Absolutely without tact, she published it when nobody wanted it. It was produced under the terrible title: " Concerning Literature, considered in its relations to Social Institutions."

When it was found to consist of very little about literature and a great deal against the man of the moment, of whom France of all parties was proud, people were angry with the author. No more than Bonaparte himself did they appreciate the appearance of this sort of ultimatum addressed to the First Consul. They did not now want to be bothered about " the perfectibility of mankind," certainly did not think it advisable that the State should be controlled by the literary lights of the day, above all did not think it the moment for defending the *philosophes*. That was all very well in the Eighteenth Century, but it was now the Nineteenth Century—the book appeared in the year 1800.

Bonaparte was embarrassed by this defiance, which stirred up spirits against him in Paris, where he wanted, above all things, repose, for he was not yet firm upon his seat. He tried to read the book, and exclaimed: "May the devil carry me away if I can make head or tail of her long words; my intelligence is not sufficient to find a word of sense in the whole thing. The reputed profundity of her ideas is too much for me!"

He flung it into a corner, but understood well enough that la Staël was writing at him. He left her alone, however, and went off to Italy over the Alps to fight the Austrians in the campaign which was made glorious by the battle of Marengo. On

his way, Necker saw him in Switzerland, and spoke up for his daughter. In pleading her cause, he told Bonaparte that he would " be the better for fortifying himself by welcoming the celebrated talents."

The First Consul thought Necker an old bore out of date, but was civil to him for an hour, and, as a result of the conversation, Madame de Staël was not molested in Paris. There, however, she was wishing for his defeat. " The good of France," she wrote, " made it necessary that he should have a reverse." The Opposition, known as the " *coterie* Staël," began to intrigue against him, and to talk about founding a provisional Government under his brother Lucien when false news arrived that he had been defeated. Bonaparte heard of it, but won Marengo and then returned to Paris in a rage, and told Fouché that he would " crush these marplots—stamp down these traitors in the mud." Madame de Staël was out of the way then (July, 1800), at Coppet, near Geneva, but that territory had been annexed to France, and had the First Consul thought it worth while he could easily have sent and had her arrested whether it were French territory or no.

Oddly enough, she was herself more fascinated than anyone at his success, and wrote to that effect to Madame Récamier. She returned to Paris in December, and remained quiet during the winter which saw the completion of Bonaparte's Peace of Lunéville, which confirmed to France definitely the cession of all of the Austrian Netherlands, or Belgium, and much or northern Italy.

Never more than during this winter of 1800-1801 did she suffer in her *amour propre*. It pained her

vanity greatly that Bonaparte should not occupy himself about her at all, but treat her as a mere woman who ought to be left quietly to her embroidery work. She could not as yet hate him; his genius dazzled her. She told Lucien Bonaparte, with tears in her eyes, that she was becoming idiotic from her desire to become pleasing to him, but that when in his presence she scarcely knew how to choose her words or phrases. Lucien repeated to his brother Napoleon that Madame de Staël had said: " I want to force him to occupy himself with me, but in his presence I become as stupid as a goose." The First Consul replied, laughingly: "I understand—that means that her astonished genius trembles before mine."

To make up for her disappointment, the whole of that winter Madame de Staël indulged in an endless round of gaiety, invited everyone to her own residence, and went everywhere. Balls and parties followed each other without end, and wherever she could she dragged the unwilling Benjamin behind her. Paris was commencing to be once more a lively place, as many of the old nobility had returned from the emigration to swell the ranks of the new people whom Bonaparte had made and brought into prominence.

Although easy going enough in his own morals in private life, he was commencing vigorously to endeavour to do away with the old open license of the days of the Directory, he objected to publicly acknowledged liaisons, and, while forcing his Generals and Talleyrand to be married, closed his doors to a whole group of Josephine's female friends who were conspicuous for their want of virtue.

While thus trying to raise the social tone of Paris, it annoyed the First Consul that Madame de Staël should openly lead such an immoral life, flaunt her immorality while living apart from her husband. He said, angrily, that were a man to treat his wife as she treated the Baron de Staël, and to spend so much himself on his pleasures while leaving her in poverty, no one would wish to call that man his friend.

He declared, further, that she ought to make her husband a good allowance in return for the distinction that his rank and position had given her. The First Consul became angry concerning the influence which Madame de Staël exercised over Benjamin Constant politically, as much as at the bad example which she set to others by the way in which she openly proclaimed her liaison. Consequently, while suppressing various newspapers and banishing from Paris several chiefs of the Jacobin party, in April, 1801, he caused Madame de Staël to be warned that if she was not careful she would also receive her marching orders.

Pleased with having at length attracted the attention of Bonaparte, Madame de Staël returned to her father at Coppet, and, painting the First Consul as a tyrant, persuaded him to write and publish a political treatise, which Necker entitled his " Last Views of Policy and Finance." This was an irritating pamphlet which, while running down the First Consul's methods, spoke of him patronisingly as " the necessary man."

Returning to Paris, the ill-advised lady followed up her attack by a constant flow of bitter and witty sayings which were intended to exasperate the First

Consul. He caused Talleyrand, her former lover, to caution the imprudent women, but she would not be restrained. To make matters worse, she inspired her latest lover, Camille Jordan, also to publish a brochure of an aggravating nature upon the occasion of Bonaparte being proclaimed First Consul for Life. The worst offence of which Madame de Staël was, however, guilty at this time was to join in a conspiracy with, Bonaparte's rival, General Bernadotte, who became later King of Sweden, where he established a Royal line existing to-day. While some of the conspirators were for shooting the First Consul outright, the milder plan of Bernadotte, who sought to replace Bonaparte, was simply to have him carried off, which action was to be covered by certain legal formalities.

The First Consul knew all about it, and sent Joseph to tell Bernadotte that if he did not stop plotting he would have him shot like a dog in the Place du Carrousel. A dozen of the conspirators were arrested, but, to avoid a scandal, released after a short time without being prosecuted.

Madame de Staël was not so much as arrested, but allowed to return to Coppet unmolested, even although Bonaparte was angry with her for her father's brochure, which he divined correctly to be her handiwork. She was pleased at his irritation, but feared somewhat, and wrote in consequence: "He fears me. That is my joy, my pride, and it is also my terror."

Her fears were justified when M. Lebrun, the Second Consul, wrote with freezing politeness to Necker, that never again need he expect to have any employment in the State of which he had been three

times Minister of Finance, and further that, since it was only too evident that false reports from Madame de Staël had influenced his work, the man whom he called "necessary" thought it better that she should remain away from France. This was a distinct order of exile, but the actual words used by the First Consul had been: "Never shall the daughter of M. Necker re-enter Paris."

CHAPTER XXV

MADAME DE STAËL, "DELPHINE" AND "CORINNE"

In the month of December, 1802, Madame de Staël sent forth to Paris from her retreat at Coppet a novel to which she gave the title of "Delphine."

By its publication she sought to brave Napoleon Bonaparte, whom she thought by its expected success to bring to her feet. Her anticipations of success were realised, if not the result from Bonaparte, for the book was received everywhere with open arms. Nothing else was talked about but "Delphine" in the salons of Paris, while translations appeared all over Europe. The principles of the book were, however, altogether offensive to the First Consul, it being strongly opposed to Catholicism, which, by his Concordat with the Pope, he had recently re-introduced as the State religion of France. It also praised up divorce, which was opposed by Bonaparte the more because his brothers and sisters were constantly worrying him to divorce his none too faithful Josephine and take another wife of more exalted rank, one by whom he might be able to raise some posterity.

The people whom the First Consul engaged to re-

port to him the gossip of the salons—one woman notably, a Madame Hammelin, told him, truly, that " Delphine " was the rage, and that the public mind was greatly interested in the opinions expressed in the book, that, in fact, Madame de Staël had fully succeeded in agitating public opinion in a manner contrary to his views.

Paris at this time contained a mass of combustible elements, and such a work thrown into its midst was calculated to have the effect of a firebrand in a powder magazine. Thus, instead of the First Consul being, as Madame de Staël foolishly hoped, disarmed by the publication of " Delphine," his anger against her was increased. When Madame de Staël was in Paris, she formed the link between all societies; even in Bonaparte's own family she was well received. She stayed at Mortfontaine with Joseph and his amiable and simple wife, Julie, and was intimate also with his brother Lucien, with whom he had constant disagreements. Thus even Bonaparte's own relations were more than likely to be encouraged in their ideas about divorce by the appearance of her novel.

The First Consul looked upon " Delphine " as a dangerous work, and especially so on account of its laxity of morals. What was the use of his endeavouring to improve the tone of Parisian society, even to the extent of requesting Madame Tallien to be more decent, and not to appear as a semi-nude Diana at the Opera, when society was thus encouraged to take the bit in its teeth and live entirely as it chose?

While Bonaparte was insisting that there should

be no more openly recognised liaisons, also insisting that everyone should be married, here, he declared, was a woman who was subverting all minds with what he called "her vagabondage of imagination, disorder of mind, metaphysics and sentiment."

Not only was Bonaparte irritated by "Delphine," but his wife, Josephine, who saw in it herself affected by that danger of divorce which was later realised. The exponent of divorce in the book was a M. de Lebensei, who was Benjamin Constant in print. In the book this Lebensei marries a divorced woman, who exclaims rhapsodically: "Between God and love, I only recognise my conscience as mediator." Benjamin, as will be remembered, divorced his first wife and subsequently married Charlotte de Hardenberg, who had been divorced twice.

The worst phase of "Delphine" in Bonaparte's eyes was, however, not so much this question of divorce as that of the attack from a Protestant standpoint upon his Concordat. He had re-established the Catholic religion as an act of policy, which would rally many to his side who had remained Catholic at heart during all the mummeries of the Revolution, which had introduced such absurdities as the worship of a half-naked Goddess of Reason, taken from the streets to be elevated to the altar of Notre Dame. An enormous number of the irreligious of both sexes in France were greatly in favour of Protestantism as a State religion, in order that the power of the Catholic clergy overthrown during the Revolution might never again be asserted. Madame de Staël, who, like Constant, although free thinking, had been brought up in a

Protestant household, now actively aroused the antagonism to Bonaparte's Concordat of all those who would have preferred any kind of faith rather than one of which the Pope was head.

In addition to thus being found anti-Catholic, anti-social, and immoral, " Delphine " praised up Liberty, especially English liberty, to excess. It was frankly Anglophile, be-lauding the English and their institutions. Now the First Consul hated the English; therefore, to declare a love for them was to make a declaration of war against him.

In publishing her book, Madame de Staël had claimed for it that it was merely a romance and in no measure political, but it is easy enough to understand that she was throwing down the glove to Bonaparte when she brought it out.

He, meanwhile, was amused to see by her letters, all of which were unsealed, copied and brought to him, the manner in which she wrote to her friends that by its publication she expected to bring him to his bearings.

The heroine, Delphine, in whom she had pictured herself, with " her brilliant conversation, her passionate and romantic spirit and her enthusiasm," was distinctly a person to be kept out of, not to be brought back to, France, and this Bonaparte proposed to do. In the meantime, he caused the Elector of Saxony to be written to, to prevent the sale of the book in that literary centre, Leipzig.

Madame de Staël was also pulled to pieces in the " Mercure de France." In an article written evidently by Bonaparte's directions, great sport was

made of "these unhappy women, whose hearts were always crushed by ingratitude, by melancholy." "Look at them!" exclaimed the writer. "They are tall, coarse, fat, strong!—their face, beaming with an excess of health, only shows traces of the sorrows which result from too much indulgence in the passions of the heart."

The jealous women writers of the day, headed by Madame de Genlis, combined to fall upon the author of "Delphine." Thus, in spite of the undoubted success of her latest literary effort, Madame de Staël found that she had aroused a veritable hornets' nest about her ears.

Nevertheless, this confident woman resolved to return to France, and that, too, notwithstanding the fact that, in reply to the pleadings of his brother Joseph on her behalf, the First Consul had answered: "Let her go to live in England, as she has threatened. Her house here is merely the home of intrigue and opposition. She receives those of all parties, and not only together but separately, and stirs them up to discontent. I will not have her come."

In spite of the First Consul, who had later melted a little, and said that she might come "in the following year," Madame de Staël wrote to Joseph that she was coming to France at once, and she came and established herself at Maffliers, a few miles from Paris. Bonaparte then kindly wrote to her that she might remain there if she was prudent. That, however, she could not be. It was the year 1803, and war being about to break out once more with England, the First Consul was preparing a Camp of

Invasion at Boulogne. Madame de Staël then indulged loudly in satirical laughter against the flat-bottomed boats and pinnaces with which he proposed to carry out his invasion. She also declaimed without any reserve against the barbarity of Bonaparte in imprisoning several thousand English travellers in France.

Once she was established at her country house at Maffliers, the women authors of Paris lost no time in endeavouring to get rid of their great rival. Madame de Genlis, who was then employed by Bonaparte to write him a fortnightly letter of gossip, soon told him the truth about the endless flow of visitors of all descriptions thronging to Madame de Staël. He did not wish to leave a centre of conspiracy behind him if he invaded England, and therefore sent an amiable officer of Gendarmes to induce her to leave France without any scandal. With the permission of this "literary Gendarme," Lieutenant Gaudriot, the authoress of "Delphine" came to spend a few days in Paris. She was then allowed to pass a day or two with Joseph Bonaparte and his wife at Mortfontaine. Then, despite all the pleadings of her powerful friends, she was told by Joseph that she was to be allowed to remain no longer, but might if she liked go to Prussia, since she declared that she found Coppet too dull. After driving the whole way round Paris, which she dared not re-enter, Madame de Staël took leave of Joseph Bonaparte at Bondy, and then, in floods of tears, set off, accompanied by Benjamin Constant, for Berlin.

In the following year Bonaparte was proclaimed

as the Emperor Napoleon, and during her first and second visits to Germany, as during her visits to Austria and Italy, Madame de Staël did everything in her power to arouse the feelings of the Continental nations against the great man as whose victim she posed. Being admitted to the society of Crowned Heads and reigning Dukes and Duchesses, the harm that, with her endless flow of talk, Madame de Staël did to the Emperor Napoleon was immense. Nevertheless, he allowed her to travel in these foreign countries under the direct protection of the French Ambassadors, and in every way behaved towards his spiteful antagonist *en galant homme*.

The Emperor even allowed Madame de Staël to return to French soil, upon condition that she kept at a distance of forty leagues from the capital. She lived accordingly at various country places in France in the year 1806, and indulged during her travels in a new passion, with the younger M. de Barante, whose father, as Prefect of Geneva, had somewhat compromised himself by his leniency to her when she was under secret police surveillance at Coppet, where she had lived in great style after her father's death in June, 1805.

Having written her novel "Corinne or Italy," Madame de Staël, who was miserable at being compelled to reside in country places, and wished to return to Paris to enjoy the glory of its publication, continued to behave foolishly. She travelled about with a regular Court of men, and usually also Madame Récamier, and purposely attracted great attention to herself when driving from some country

house into the theatre at such places as Rouen or Blois while thus accompanied.

The Emperor allowed her, however, to approach to the Château d'Acosta, only twelve leagues from Paris, in January, 1807, but when Fouché asked him to allow her to come to Paris, Napoleon wrote from the seat of war in Prussia, saying that the Minister of Police was not to permit "that rascal of a woman, that *méchante intrigante*," to come any nearer.

Nevertheless, Fouché was disobedient to the Emperor. He not only allowed Madame de Staël to enter Paris in April, 1807, but lied to his master at the seat of war about the matter, saying that she had left for Coppet.

The fact was that Fouché, now become Duc d'Otranto, found her presence useful to himself, since by reading all the letters sent to or by Madame de Staël he was finding out many political secrets.

The Emperor Napoleon, in the very hottest of the war against Prussia and Russia, had, however, time to be angry and to write no less than ten letters about this troublesome woman to Fouché and others. In two at least of these he shewed his Police Minister that he knew him to be lying. In one he sarcastically informed Fouché that he was "evidently badly informed," mentioned the recent dates upon which he knew Madame de Staël to have been present at literary parties in Paris, and added that, to save disagreeable scenes, she must get out at once, or he "would put the gendarmes on to her."

In a further letter, he informed Fouché that she had written to him six pretentious pages, and reproached the Minister with foolishly buoying her up with hopes that she would be allowed to remain. He added that if Fouché knew as much as he did of her recent movements he would be surprised, for that " although five hundred leagues from France, I know better what is taking place there than the Minister of Police."

The truth was that Napoleon knew perfectly well that his clever and unscrupulous tool, Fouché, was ready to turn against him in case he should meet with a reverse, that therefore he was in reality as well aware as himself of the fact that Madame de Staël was the head of the party in Paris for stirring up the Revolution again. Through his secret police and paid correspondents, the Emperor had all the facts before him—how she was seeing people, agitating and waiting for the good news of the loss of a battle in order to get rid of him.

Meanwhile, while the new novel " Corinne " made its appearance at the end of April, 1807, its author had slowly to drag her footsteps away from the city which she adored, back to what she considered her solitude in a house full of people at Coppet. It was a house where the mornings were supposed to be devoted to serious work, the evenings to love-making and theatrical entertainments.

Vainly, as in the case of " Delphine," she hoped that the success of " Corinne " would force the Emperor to yield and recall her from exile. He was only more bitter than ever when he found that, in

the midst of his brilliant victories, she was boasting that she had not made any allusion to them in her preface. Moreover that, as though from a feeling of personal spite, she disparaged the character and made much of the frivolity of the French people in her novel, while exalting the English as gods. The Emperor declared that he could not forgive Madame de Staël for thus disparaging the French nature, for having shewn herself so anti-French, while yet continually desiring to reside in Paris and mix herself up in French politics, with her absurd battle-cry of "Liberty and Enthusiasm!"

Those who read "Corinne" to-day can but be bored with the book, with its impossible Lord Nelvil, Peer of Scotland, who steered a ship as nobly as he marched at the head of his regiment through Hyde Park, with its heroine, who cannot restrain her tears when the chaplain of the ship prays God "for grace to defend our noble Constitution."

To Napoleon, then in a state of war with England, the book must have seemed in as bad taste as it was ridiculous.

To the people of her day the book was not boring, however, but interesting, since in it Madame de Staël had pictured herself as she imagined herself to be, and even introduced some of her own vainglorious Italian experiences, which she had already related to everybody.

Trying to re-read "Corinne" later, when a prisoner at St. Helena, the Emperor was frankly disgusted with the picture of the heroine, with "her arms of striking beauty, her tall, rather strongly-

built figure in the Greek style, her inspired glance, her sensibility, her grace, her gaiety, her depth, her abandon, her great power of loving, her disposition to boredom, her desire of distraction, which even the deepest passion cannot entirely dispel."

The tableau was too much for Napoleon. As he dashed the book to his feet, he exclaimed: "Oh! I see her, I hear her, I feel her—and I want to fly from her!"

For eight long years after the publication of "Corinne" the Emperor was, however, unable to get away from the vision of the woman whom he kept in exile from Paris, and who had now herself been universally named Corinne.

During those eight years, by her writings, such as her book "De l'Allemagne" or her "Dix Années d'Exil," or by her personal presence in foreign Courts, Corinne stirred up Europe against Napoleon. Her manœuvres and intrigues, during the course of which she visited, among others, the Emperor Alexander of Russia and Bernadotte, now Prince Royal of Sweden, were largely responsible for the coalition of Europe against him.

After Napoleon's banishment to Elba in 1814, and return in triumph to France in the following year, she suddenly veered over to his side, in the hopes of obtaining from him the return of Necker's famous two millions. She then even wrote to persuade Lord Castlereagh and the Prince Regent of the Emperor's pacific intentions! She turned against him again, however, to give him a kick when she thought he was falling, calling Napoleon "the man whom we detest" in a letter to the Emperor Alexander just before Waterloo.

Napoleon survived for four years the woman whose advances he had rejected. Madame de Staël died in Paris on the thirteenth day of July, 1817, at the age of fifty-one, while the ex-Emperor was aged fifty-two when he expired at St. Helena on May 5th, 1821.

MADAME RÉCAMIER
From the painting by David, in the Louvre

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CHAPTER XXVI

MADAME DE STAËL AND MADAME DE RÉCAMIER

When Madame de Staël died, Benjamin Constant proved his devotion at the last by sitting up all night long with her body, in company with the young Duc Victor de Broglie, who had married the lovely Albertine de Staël when at length Necker's two millions had been recovered from Louis XVIII. to serve as her dowry.

Madame de Staël was buried by her father's side at Coppet, but it would not be fitting to leave her to her long rest without some reference to the life which she had often led at this place, and the friends that she had present there during her agitated career. During her lifetime she may be said to have met every person of any importance in every society in Europe. The names of these people of more or less distinction begin with every letter of the alphabet from A to Z. One has, therefore, only to mention such people of interest as the Emperor Alexander, the Duchess Louise of Weimar, Lord Byron, Goethe, or the Duke of Wellington to be sure that at some time or other she had been on more or less friendly terms with them.

That she considered herself intellectually the superior of all the men of genius of the day becomes evident by the reply made by Madame de Staël when told that, knowing German very imperfectly, she could never understand Goethe. "I understand all that is worth understanding, the rest is unimportant," was her answer.

Although the German poets found her too loquacious to please them, and she thought them dull in return, it was in Germany that she picked up a man of much learning to whom she owed a great deal. At Berlin she met with Augustus William Schlegel, a writer who had made himself very unpopular in France, by his comparison of the tragic poet Euripides to Racine, and greatly to the disadvantage of the latter. She offered Schlegel a large salary to come and live with her to instruct her boys. He did so, but became her own teacher upon many subjects of which she was ignorant. He became her collaborator in her book "De l'Allemagne," although not acknowledged as such. Indeed, this book about Germany was written far more by Schlegel than herself. Schlegel accompanied Madame de Staël everywhere, and, acting as her courrier, explained to her Germany, Italy, and especially Rome, with its artistic side, of which she knew little and cared less, although she found his lessons come in useful to her in writing Corinne.

Benjamin Constant gives us an amusing picture in his "Journal" of Schlegel and Madame de Staël sparring together at Coppet like a couple of cock sparrows. He also allows it to appear that the

German aspired to a share in the very large heart of the lady, which, indeed, greatly resembled an artichoke, with a leaf to spare for everybody.

If Schlegel did not receive his leaf, Madame de Staël was certainly very ungrateful. She herself did not, however, succeed in obtaining the leaf which she had asked for from M. de Villers, who instructed her in the philosophy of Kant shortly before she had fallen in with Schlegel.

It was to the latter that she owed the intellectual development which the former had slightly sketched upon her intelligence. In addition to enlightening her concerning knowledge of every description, Schlegel took a very active part in her anti-Napoleonic campaign, above everything aiding in combating French influence of whatever description in Germany, where he ardently preached the crusade against the Emperor.

Recognising the strength which Madame de Staël gained from the support of Schlegel, at a period when she had been making herself more than usually obnoxious to him, Napoleon caused his Minister of Police to order Schlegel to leave Coppet.

Later, after she had fled from Coppet to Russia and Sweden, Schlegel became an important fourth in a curious conspiracy entered into between Bernadotte, then Prince Royal of Sweden, Madame de Staël, and Benjamin Constant, which had for object the placing of Bernadotte upon the throne of France when Napoleon was retreating before the allies. About the same time Madame de Staël published in Hamburg a brochure entitled "Upon the Continental System and its Relations with Sweden."

Of this violent pamphlet she was afraid to own the paternity. She therefore declared vehemently that it was written by Schlegel, who, being safely out of Napoleon's reach, acknowledged it as his own. When eventually, owing chiefly to her instances, Bernadotte ventured to join in the coalition against Napoleon, he took with him to the seat of war Schlegel as his Private Secretary, and Albert de Staël as his Aide de Camp.

The career of Albert was but a short one, for this second son of Madame de Staël engaged in a duel with sabres, in which his antagonist sliced off the poor boy's head from his shoulders.

Schlegel continued, however, to be in a sense the diplomatic agent of Madame de Staël with the Prince Royal of Sweden, but the plot for placing the latter on the throne of France failed by the return of the Bourbons. Then it was that, having returned to Paris and so strangely commenced to intrigue in favour of her old opponent, Napoleon, and his brother-in-law, Murat, King of Naples, Madame de Staël received perhaps the greatest snubbing of her life.

Louis XVIII., who was not without an ironical sense of humour, and who had read her letters, caused his Minister of Police, Dandré, to return them to her, while saying: " Madame, here is your correspondence with the King of Naples. I return it to you and you can forward it; the King has read it. You can, Madame, continue to write and to receive letters; you can travel in France, go out of France, come back again, take up your domicile there. So little importance attaches to all

that you do, to all that you say, to all that you write, that the Government wishes neither to know it nor to trouble you concerning it, or even to permit that you should be caused the least anxiety concerning your projects and concerning your mysteries."

A young man of whom Madame de Staël saw a great deal, and whom, during those giddy days in Paris when, while running vainly after Bonaparte, she was still a leader in the salons, it pleased her " to protect," was M. René de Chateaubriand. He had then just returned to France from the emigration, and later he rarely neglected to pay his court to her by taking any opportunity of saying or writing some little flattery likely to please.

Thus, when " Delphine " appeared, Chateaubriand declared that the pages of the novel in which its author depicted her own father in the person of the father of Madame de Cerlèbe to be " the most touching " in the book. In the " Mercure de France " he was, however, good-humouredly satirical, when he observed that although Madame de Staël expressed religious ideas in her preface, the rest of the book seemed to assert that " there was nothing more dry than Christianity, or more tender than philosophy."

During her first journey to Germany, in 1803-1804, we find the author of " Delphine " writing to her sympathetic friend upon the subject of her hopes of being allowed to return to Paris, while upon her father's death she would seem to have been affected by Chateaubriand's religious tendencies. These from being materialistic had changed to Christianity, he having declared that " the sensualistic philosophy

of the eighteenth century " no longer sufficed him. In June of 1805 Chateaubriand was one of those who came to cheer the melancholy which she declared that she experienced in her beautiful home upon the shores of the blue Lake of Geneva, and in full view of the inspiring Alpine peaks. He was there again in the following winter, forming one of a gay and numerous company which amused itself by playing tragedies and comedies, many of which were written by their hostess.

Chateaubriand was accompanied by his wife, whose attractions would seem later to have been entirely neglected for those of that arch-coquette Madame Récamier. He was one of the few men for whom this beautiful creature was not ashamed to acknowledge those feelings of passion which she refused to so many, including Benjamin Constant, who became hopelessly in love with her. Benjamin was, by the way, present during this season of play-acting at Coppet and at Geneva. In his " Journal Intime " we find him mentioning, humorously, that he consented to take the part of Zopire in the play of Mahomet " for the pleasure of being able to abuse the Prophet."

Chateaubriand joined Madame de Staël in resisting Napoleon, but was no conspirator, and his pen was accordingly disdained rather than feared by the Emperor, although he threatened to have him sabred on the steps of the Tuileries, threatened also his clique with extermination.

There was, however, this difference between the opposition of Chateaubriand and the mistress of Coppet, that while the latter spoke in the name of Liberty and the principles of the Revolution, the

former, in his trenchant articles in the " Mercure " —one of which was so bold as to send a shiver through Europe—was speaking on behalf of old Monarchical France.

In the character of a friend, we often find Chateaubriand lecturing Madame de Staël, finding fault with her discontent while possessed of such a beautiful home, so much money, while others are starving. " Why," he asks, " worry about not being able to return to Paris? Had I but a little thatched cottage of my own in the country and the means to exist in peace, I would never seek to see Paris again. Be reasonable! " His words, however, fell upon deaf ears, for she never ceased her repinings.

The only real woman friend of the Baroness de Staël-Holstein was the lovely Madame Récamier.

Born Juliette Bernard, this celebrated beauty was early married to a French banker many years her senior. Like all the celebrated French women who were fortunate enough to secure well-to-do husbands a good deal older than themselves—and Madame Roland was another of them—this disparity of ages has been advanced as a sufficient excuse for her levity of conduct.

Differing from Madame Roland, who had brains and, as she herself admits, an ardent nature, Madame Récamier was a woman of no intellect to speak of, and apparently the temperament of a fish. She had only beauty, which was of form as much as of face, a beauty of which she made the most to habitually lure men to her feet, to agitate their passions, and, her own vanity being satisfied, to laugh and leave them there.

Of one virtue Juliette seems to have been possessed, that of fidelity to her friendship to Madame de Staël, in order to visit whom she was ready to risk Napoleon's displeasure, with the result that upon one occasion she was banished to a distance of forty leagues from Paris.

To Coppet, with her reputation of having a husband who was "nothing but a father to her," came the beautiful Madame Récamier in the autumn of 1807, when the banker Récamier had just had serious reverses.

Madame de Staël's house was the stopping place for all travellers of distinction, and to it at the same time came Prince Augustus of Prussia. Madame de Staël had known at Berlin his brother, Prince Louis, who had recently fallen on the field of Saalfeld. Prince Augustus, who had been made a prisoner in a marsh during the battle of Prentzlow, had just been released by Napoleon, after having been detained at Soissons and at Nancy. The young Prince had been granted permission to retire to Italy, and had taken Madame de Staël's house of Coppet on the way through Switzerland. The delight of the hostess can be imagined, when she had thus the opportunity of receiving under her roof a handsome Prince, above all one of a Royal family bitterly opposed to Napoleon, the despot, who had so brutally received Queen Louise in the moment of her greatest misfortunes.

The young Prince was twenty-four years old, and of manly appearance. His manners were most engaging; he had been a prisoner of war, he hated Napoleon! What more could be required to turn

all feminine heads at Coppet, and especially that of the châtelaine herself?

Benjamin Constant found Prince Augustus "distinguished looking," and wrote in his diary: "Of how much more worth are the Germans than ourselves!"

The Prince, for his part, became at once crazy with a passionate love for Juliette Récamier, and when it was a case of a Royal Prince, a real hero of romance, sighing for her charms, how could the fair Juliette remain cold? The Emperor, who was informed of all that transpired, was furious with Madame de Staël for her connivance and complaisance.

Sinking herself entirely, the forty year old hostess did all in her power to aid the amours of her guests, and thus in Coppet, the home of intrigue, commenced a liaison which lasted for two years—from 1807 to 1809.

Further, so delighted was the very rich Prince Augustus with his charming conquest that he had no hesitation in giving to Madame Récamier a written promise of marriage. It was from the burning and passionate expressions of this document that originated the report that Augustus of Prussia had sealed this promise of marriage with his own blood.

With the promise in her possession, the lovely Juliette wrote to her elderly spouse to represent to him that now surely was the moment to shew his fatherly devotion to her, by procuring a divorce by which she should be enabled to marry her Prince Charming. Alas! however, for aged husbands and

their views! "Papa" Récamier replied that since she had been content to be his wife while he was rich, he thought that it would show better taste on the part of Juliette to remain his wife now that he was poor. He refused the divorce, and thus the intrigue which began at Coppet was never followed by a Royal marriage for the elegant Juliette Récamier.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE COMTESSE DE GENLIS

The lady whom the historian Michelet has somewhere described as "that mass of *sensibilité* and ink, Madame de Genlis," came into the world in the year 1746.

Born of an extravagant and ruined noble family, of a good-natured father fond of sport, and a handsome, frivolous mother, who resorted to flirtation as a means of livelihood, Mademoiselle Félicité du Crest may be said to have started life in childhood knowing everything that she ought not to know and very little that she should.

From her earliest years, she was taught to do nothing but dress herself up and perform in private theatricals, taking a share in plays of the very light description then in vogue. The girl, neglected by her mother, carried this love of dressing up into her daily life, running about the country on her father's estate of Saint-Aubin attired as a boy, and thus dressed climbing trees, or fishing at night with her father, until his misfortunes drove him away from the place from which he took the title of Marquis to the city of Paris, there to sponge upon relatives

and rich elderly gentlemen with whom his wife was a great success.

This father, Pierre César du Crest, soon retired from the scene, to go to look after some estates in Saint Domingo, while his wife took little Félicité with her when she went to reside under the roof of the rich farmer-general Lenormant d'Étioles, whose wife had deserted him to become the *maîtresse en titre* of Louis XV. and the Marquise de Pompadour. By a series of somewhat complicated financial arrangements, Lenormant d'Étioles eventually became the owner of Pierre César's estates of Saint-Aubin and Bourbon-Lancy, from which latter place little Félicité, after having become a *chanoinesse* or canoness, seems to have been called Madame la Comtesse de Bourbon-Lancy. The title of Madame was one always accorded to those girls of noble families admitted to the semi-religious status of a *chanoinesse*. The child seems, however, to have lost it and her title together and to have been known simply as Mademoiselle du Crest when, in her thirteenth year, we find her residing under the roof of that excessively rich old rake, La Popelinière.

He was a farmer-general, who was chiefly remarkable for having been made a fool of by the gay Duc de Richelieu. Having an intrigue—one of the thousands for which he was renowned—with Madame Popelinière, the vicious noble and vicious wife between them devised a means of carrying on their illicit love, which when known aroused the laughter of all Paris at the expense of the deceived husband. A fireplace with a revolving back was built in the

bedroom of Madame Popelinière, and thus Richelieu, who had bought the house next door, and his mistress were at all times able to have access to one another, in spite of the husband, who had forbidden the Duc to visit his wife.

China models were sold in Paris of the Popelinière fireplace, but the farmer-general had contrived in some manner to get rid of his unfaithful spouse before he received Madame du Crest and her young daughter, among many others, under his hospitable roof at Passy in the outskirts of Paris.

Félicité had developed a wonderful musical talent; she was already a renowned harpist, and played upon half a dozen other musical instruments. While evidently very kind to the mother, who now wanted for nothing, the farmer-general had the daughter instructed to become a graceful dancer, and gave her masters of all descriptions. What was the nature of the affection of this old man for the girl of thirteen, whom he wanted to marry, and who very much wanted to marry him, we can only guess at. Madame de Genlis had herself later so very much to say of his noble character, his boundless generosity and purity of intentions, that the world, recognising her beauty and by no means too strict regard for the truth, was unkind enough to remark, "Methinks the lady doth protest too much!"

If anything were calculated to lower the moral tone of an *espiégle* young lady in that very vicious period of the reign of Louis XV., the opportunity was now given to her of mixing in a society where morals were an unknown quantity.

At the age of thirteen, the girl, who was really beautiful, passed all her spare time in the green room of the theatre of Passy, where M. Popelinière delighted to see her figuring upon the stage among the other actresses.

Having regretfully decided that the well-born Félicité du Crest was too young to become Madame Popelinière, the farmer-general married one of these actresses, whereupon all this life of indolence in the midst of riches came to an end for mother and daughter.

In Paris now they supported themselves somehow, and, although supposed to be penniless, lived well. We are told that by visiting the salons of the noble rich, the girl, at the age of fifteen, contrived to obtain presents to the extent of twenty-five louis at a time, on account of her wonderful performance on the harp. Anyhow, while herself starting a salon of some description, Madame du Crest lived, whether by money of her own earning or that of her daughter matters little.

Of the excessive industry of the latter there is little doubt. Not only would she practice on her musical instruments all day long, but, recognising her want of education, endeavoured also to become instructed in general subjects of every kind. One or two elderly men of title were now ready to marry the exceedingly attractive and sparkling young lady, but in later days, when Madame de Genlis flooded the world with her pages upon the subject of morality, she gave as her reason for declining the most important of these, the Baron d'Andlau, his dissolute character.

She says that she "would not have allowed him to marry a decent servant maid." Failing the daughter, the Baron married the mother instead, her husband having died shortly after returning from Saint Domingo.

Félicité du Crest would seem at this early period of her life to have been a perfect dream, an exquisite young creature, who delighted the eye and whose lively sallies charmed the ear. She was, nevertheless, all the more a dream since, while posing as an *ingénue* reduced with her mother to all kinds of shifts to earn her daily bread, she was no *ingénue* at all.

Talleyrand, at this time the youthful Abbé de Périgord, would appear during her early married life to have been the successful lover of the Comtesse de Genlis, as subsequently of the Baronne de Staël.

Although from lover he became the friend of both ladies, this immoral priest, this brilliant and inconstant diplomat, could never resist the temptation of saying a spiteful or spicy thing. Whether it were true or no, whether or no it concerned a lady who had given him the last proofs of her love, was a matter of indifference. To say a biting thing, an epigram, so that it were amusing was all that concerned the Abbé de Talleyrand-Périgord.

An eminent French writer wrote of this man, who, while shifting from master to master—and we might add from mistress to mistress—rose so high: "Nul plus apte en effet à vêtir le mensonge de forme deçevante et menteuse!"

It behoves us, therefore, to be cauticus how we

trust the interesting individual who knew so well how to dress up the falsehood in deceiving form, and we should step warily in following Talleyrand in his insinuations as to the lengths to which the seventeen-year-old Félicité allowed herself to go, in order to induce the *roué* Comte Charles Alexis Genlis to conduct her to the altar.

Genlis, who from being a very young Captain in the Navy had become a very young Colonel in the Army, was certainly deeply smitten from the time when, both he and Félicité's father being captured together at sea by the English, he had first seen the girl's miniature in the lid of César du Crest's snuff box.

Being released from an English prison himself, he employed his powerful uncle, the Marquis de Puysieux, to arrange for the exchange of du Crest for an English prisoner, and his return to France shortly before his death.

This de Puysieux was the unworthy and scheming Minister of State by whom Louis XV. had replaced the honest Marquis d'Argenson in the Department of Foreign Affairs.

He was very rich, and, either in his own right or that of his wife, possessed the estates and Marquisate of Sillery, to which Colonel the Comte Alexis de Genlis eventually succeeded. For fear of enraging the Marquis de Puysieux and his wife, and likewise their daughter, wife of the Maréchal d'Estreés, Genlis had to be on his guard. His uncle had already caused him to be imprisoned for three years, under a *lettre de cachet*, for the offence of gambling too highly.

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As upon his return from England de Puysieux was endeavouring to arrange to provide him with a great heiress, the young officer was doubly afraid of provoking his uncle by marrying a penniless girl, no matter how beautiful she might be.

This penniless girl was, however, highly ambitious, and in her endeavour to win an entry into that society in which she was only tolerated as a harpist, despite her noble birth, was inclined to go pretty far.

Talleyrand hints that the libertine Genlis was, therefore, in the habit of visiting Félicité alone for some time before he could be brought up to the point of marriage. And then, suddenly, in some manner pressure was brought to bear upon him, and without any previous intimation having been given, the Comte de Genlis announced his marriage to Mademoiselle du Crest. The place at which the nuptials took place is carefully concealed by Madame de Genlis, but her biographers have succeeded in discovering it, moreover that they were celebrated at midnight of the 8th November, 1763, in the presence of a number of respectable witnesses.

Owing to the fury of the Puysieux relatives, who took away her character and would not receive her, the bride of seventeen now retired with her husband to the seat of her brother-in-law, the Marquis de Genlis, at Genlis. There, and at a convent when the Comte was away with his regiment, for two years she led the wildest and most madcap existence that it is possible to imagine. With her play acting and her practical jokes, which went so far as to smother with rouge the sleeping nuns, she turned the whole

countryside upside down, while leading all the elderly neighbours to join in her fun, frolic, and frivolity.

At the same time the juvenile Comtesse commenced to ply that pen which she was never for long to lay aside until her death, at the age of eighty-five. She wrote her first book before she became a mother at the end of her two wild years of gaiety in the country, but it was never published. After that event, the various relations melted towards her by degrees; the Comtesse de Genlis was presented at Court by Madame de Puysieux and became a success at Versailles. With her mother's beautiful younger half-sister, the Marquise de Montesson, Félicité now commenced to go about everywhere, and at the homes of those Princes of the Blood, the Duc Philippe d'Orléans, grandson of the Regent, and the Prince de Conti, the versatile young lady was made welcome, on account of her theatrical talents and musical propensities as well as for her beauty.

The lovely wife of the Duc d'Orléans, a Princess of the Conti family, being dead, the Duc was entertaining a young lady of the corps de ballet at his Château de Villers-Cotterets, and, in company with this star of the theatre and the Duc d'Orléans, the Comtesse de Genlis would frequently figure in theatrical performances, in which her earlier training in the Passy theatre enabled her to shine in a manner entirely to eclipse Madame de Montesson, who, although married, was doing her best to attract the Duc's attention to herself. The preference shewn by this elderly Prince of easy morals for the

niece caused some heartburning on the part of the handsome aunt. Although subsequently Madame de Montesson succeeded by her wiles in getting the Duc d'Orléans to marry her morganatically, there was always a veiled jealousy between the two women, notwithstanding that they pretended to be friends.

Although the Duc d'Orléans caused the young Comtesse to be painted on horseback by a famous painter, it was not, however, by the father's attentions, but those of the son, the dissolute Duc de Chartres, that she was secretly attracted. It is, moreover, in connection with this Prince and his infamous career during the Revolution, when he became known as Philippe Egalité, that Madame de Genlis figures for a time prominently upon the French stage. The Duchesse d'Abrantès, in her "Paris Salons," admits in her not always good-natured remarks that the Comtesse was an exceedingly attractive person at the age of twenty-two. While her face was charming, her almond-shaped eyes bewitching, her figure is described by the Duchesse as having been slender, lissome, and prettily rounded, her every attitude graceful and unpremeditated.

By this elegant young creature, beaming with youth, health and devilry, the clever girl who wrote the music for the ballets of proverbs in which society then danced at the Opera balls, the Duc de Chartres became violently attracted. He is said to have really fallen in love with her at one of these balls, in which she figured as a pretty peasant; but we can hardly imagine the feelings of one whose behaviour

was so wildly dissolute as the Duc de Chartres falling in love. To say that his passions were aroused would be nearer the mark, for, although recently united to a charming and lovely wife, the daughter of the Duc de Penthièvre, the indecency of the wild orgies indulged in by this Prince at the Palais-Royal and elsewhere exceeded if possible those of his great-grandfather, the Regent.

The young man may have had an excuse for his behaviour in the bad example of both his father and his mother. Their life had been, indeed, strangely passed together. According to the contemporary historian, the Abbé Soulavie, when first united, Louis Philippe d'Orléans and the lovely Louise Henriette de Conti constantly displayed in public the most indecorous passion for each other, to such an extent as to make their presence everywhere embarrassing. The whole Court laughed, when not compelled to turn aside. Then came a change. After two years the name of the mother of the Duc de Chartres "became a by-word on account of her habits of debauchery. In her scandalous life she carried her lasciviousness to all the extent of the ancient Empresses. She prostituted herself without selection to the men of the Court and city, from all ranks from a Prince of the Blood to her coachman, Lefranc, incurring without a blush the reputation of the Messalina of her age, and boasting of having merited it. She went in the evening into the old garden of the Palais Royal soliciting the embraces of strangers."

Her husband at the same time " formed a con-

nection with Madame de Villemomble, to whom he gave the estate of that name, and by whom he had Madame de Brossard and Messieurs de Saint-Albin and Saint-Far." And so the record goes on, to the time of which we are writing, concerning which the interesting Soulavie observes: "Their father became afterwards passionately attached to the beautiful but virtuous Madame de Montesson, whose maiden name was de La Haye. (The mother of Madame du Crest had married the Marquis de La Haye *en secondes noces*.) Except as his wife, Madame de Montesson refused to yield to the passion of the amorous Prince, who had, moreover, to suffer greatly from the pangs of jealousy, notably owing to the irritating behaviour of the Comte de Guines."

The story is a long one in Soulavie, who relates how, after getting rid of Guines, by having him made an Ambassador to London, the Duc d'Orléans became very jealous of his son, the Duc de Chartres, whom we now find in love with Madame de Montesson's niece, Madame de Genlis. In fact, Madame de Montesson was a very clever woman, one who after her husband's death knew very well how to play her game, with the result that she eventually captured the Prince who was the object of her pursuit.

The pretty Comtesse upon whom the Duc de Chartres had cast his eyes as something very delicious, was now at the same time indulging in an unending round of gaieties and astonishing Paris with her industry. She studied hard while dressing for a dinner; she wrote essays or books after return-

ing from the Opera. She sang, she danced, she played on her wonderful harp, she acted, she flirted. Historical novels appeared from her pen, comedies also, in which she gave herself the best parts, and danced and sang to half a dozen different instruments, which she played herself. Before the day of Madame de Staël, she was to be found addressing the Minister of Marine, or the Minister of War in communications which were really State despatches and supposed to be written by her husband.

By constantly working, even while constantly amusing herself, this marvellous Comtesse succeeded in learning various foreign languages and in assimilating all the knowledge of the day. Her brain became a wonderful storehouse, an encyclopedia of knowledge; and yet she was, after all, nothing but an ambitious and amorous young woman, and amorous chiefly because she was ambitious. As for heart—well, that is another matter! We wonder what the Comte de Genlis thought about it, or the Duchesse de Chartres some time later, when she had become the Duchesse d'Orléans.

After the death of the Marquis de Montesson in 1769, the Marquise, who had been plotting for ten years to ensnare the Duc d'Orléans, retired to the country for two years, the better to make him regret her, and long for her return. During this time she left her niece in charge of her interests in the Prince, who became so much attached to Madame de Genlis that it is evident that she was playing her own game rather than that of Madame de Montesson. She

herself admits that during her aunt's calculated retirement it only depended upon herself to take possession of the citadel of his heart, but declares that all that she did was to listen in a sympathetic manner to the very broad relation of the Prince's numerous love affairs. She was really plotting to gain access to the Household of the Duchesse de Chartres, which, with the goodwill of the Duc d'Orléans, might not prove such a difficult matter.

The Comtesse de Genlis succeeded in her design, for the Duc d'Orléans placed the young lady whom he had found to be such a good companion and good listener in the Palais Royal—at first only in the position of lady-in-waiting to the Duchesse de Chartres. There were about a dozen other ladies in the Household, in the position of grand mistress or lady-of-honour. They were nearly all much older than herself, and but a dull collection of women. By the wish of the Duchesse they had been selected for their correct behaviour, presumably for fear that the Duc de Chartres might find them too interesting.

One woman there was, however, present who, under the very nose of the pious and pure-minded young Duchesse, who was devoted to her scamp of a husband, was setting her cap at the Duc de Chartres, who was then a very handsome young man. Her name was Madame de Blot, and the Prince disliked her. She was elegant-looking of the ethereal type, and took a jealous dislike of the Comtesse de Genlis from the first, succeeded also before long in arousing the jealous dislike of the

rest of the ladies of the Household against the newcomer.

The way in which the Comtesse fought her enemies and superiors was not by resenting their giving her unnecessary orders, as Madame de Blot, being a lady-of-honour, could do, nor by accepting the ready adoration of the men, but by making a conquest of the mistress of all, the Duchesse de Chartres.

With her vast fund of ready information, her musical talents, and, above all, her constant pious discourses about religion and morality, the *intrigante* Madame de Genlis won her way to the heart of the Duchesse. Before long, to the disgust of all the other ladies, it became evident that the talented newcomer was too strong for them all, for she could twine the good and simple-minded Duchesse around her little finger, to the extent that she could not do without her constant presence. Having won a firm foothold, Madame de Genlis asked for leave of absence, and by remaining three months at Brussels made her position all the more secure, as the Duchesse de Chartres realised how much she missed her from her side.

Upon her return the Duchesse began to love her deceitful lady-in-waiting, as the latter says in her memoirs, " with a kind of passion that lasted in full force for more than fifteen years." Madame de Genlis ought to have been ashamed to write down these words, which testified so strongly to her own treacherous behaviour!

Madame de Genlis, as she proved in her subsequent career, was born with the spirit of the in-

structress strongly developed in her. The Duchesse had had no education; her lady-in-waiting therefore took her in hand, and, so to speak, organised a school with the young Duchesse for her only pupil. She made that pupil work hard, at every subject from history to geography, from metaphysics to mathematics. And then she appointed herself the private secretary of Her Royal Highness—wrote all her letters for her!

CHAPTER XXVIII

MADAME DE GENLIS' LIAISON WITH PHILIPPE ÉGALITÉ

FIRMLY installed as the favourite of the Duchesse de Chartres, leading this Princess by the nose, the brilliant young Comtesse de Genlis was able to snap her fingers at all the other ladies of the Household and to make things hum in her own attractive way at the Palais Royal. There she organised a salon in her apartments. She became a leader of society, and, while keeping at a discreet distance the elegant and debauched nobles who were the hangers on of the Duc de Chartres, delighted the Court of her mistress with her musical attainments and theatrical entertainments. Félicité de Genlis was above all things discreet, and never for a moment relaxed her vigilance towards her numerous female enemies. Of these the chief, although in secret, was probably her aunt, Madame de Montesson, whom the fat old Duc d'Orléans had secretly married some time after her niece had entered the Palais Royal. Although the marriage had taken place with the permission of Louis XV., the King had distinctly refused to allow Madame de Montesson to assume the title of Duchesse d'Orléans. It was only a morganatic mar-

riage that Louis had permitted, and barely recognised by the Duc's son and his daughter-in-law, who kept Madame de Montesson at a distance, acting in the matter, however, with a certain amount of discretion. The behaviour of the Duchesse de Chartres towards the Duc d'Orléans and his wife was in accordance with her husband's orders, and he only acted—as his letters prove—in the manner suggested to him by Madame de Genlis.

There were too many people watching the artful Félicité, including the old scandal-loving Duc d'Orléans—possibly also her husband, for whom she had found a post about the young Prince—for her to venture to indulge at once in the passion which she and Chartres had conceived for each other. Nor was it at the Palais Royal that she first threw herself willingly into the arms of the Prince.

The liaison of which the world of her day was never allowed to have definite proofs, since Madame de Genlis never permitted herself to appear openly in the position of a favourite to the cousin of the King, would not even have been a certitude to those who lived later had it not been for the evidence collected in the *cabinet noir* of Louis XV.

The terrible custom of those days, by which the Monarchs allowed themselves the privilege of reading letters not intended for their eyes, has proved damning to the reputation of the lady whose discretion was so great that she was able to assert unchallenged that it was by her skill as a harpist alone that she and her mother lived during her early girlhood, after they had left the house of the generous M. Popelinière.

From the time of Louis XV.'s great-grandfather, Louis XIV., indeed much earlier, from the day of Charles VIII., and his cousin, who became Louis XII., there was always jealousy between the Monarch on the throne and those Princes of the Blood of the Orléans branch who stood so near to the succession.

Louis XV., as we know, and Maria Theresa of Austria excelled in the art of reading each other's despatches addressed to other Princes and Crowned Heads. Letters, no matter how carefully sealed, were intercepted, opened, copied, resealed, and sent on to their destination. False seals were made bearing the necessary coats of arms and used for the purpose, while the Foreign Office clerks or other employés in distant posts must have been skilled forgers, in order to remedy the accident of a spoiled envelope, or in case at times it was deemed necessary to retain the original intercepted despatch and merely to forward a copy.

Quite apart from his Ministers' knowledge, Louis XV. differed from other Kings of his day in having a secret agency for obtaining information of matters of which he did not wish his Ministers to become aware, or to find out what they or his Ambassadors were about themselves. Even a Prince of the Blood—the Prince de Conti—was one of these secret agents, and of the efficiency with which they did their work Louis XVI. became aware, to his amazement, when upon his accession in 1774 he went through his grandfather's private papers. He then saw how Louis XV. had by no means been so much the dupe of the Duc de Choiseul as had been

imagined, saw, moreover, how he had himself been given his wife, Marie Antoinette, as the result of the plot between Choiseul and Maria Theresa to introduce an Austrian spy into the heart of Versailles.

In his jealous suspicions of the House of Orléans, and to satisfy his curiosity as to what its members were about, Louis XV. kept a very close eye upon the actions and illicit love-affairs of the Duc de Chartres, whose movements were, moreover, under constant secret police surveillance to the most astonishing extent, as revealed by the historian, the Abbé Soulavie.

From a humorous story related by the Abbé, it appears that the rowdy young Prince discovered accidentally, from the revelations of a high police official, how not only was he watched, but protected day after day, night after night, when he was in places where he was likely to meet with trouble. He would, however, appear for a time to have been quite unaware that his letters were being read by his cousin Louis XV., that these dainty *billets-doux* which he received with the seal unbroken had been chuckled over by the debauched old King with his saucy mistress, the Comtesse du Barry.

Such was, however, the case, and great must have been the amusement which the unprincipled Monarch derived from the letters from Chartres to Félicité and from Félicité, who was hypocritically discoursing to his deceived wife upon the evils of immorality, to Louis Philippe de Chartres. Copies of all these letters were subsequently found carelessly put away among a quantity of documents of a

different nature in the Archives of the French Foreign Office, and they were published, in his L'Idylle d'un Gouverneur," by M. Gaston Maugras in 1904.

The sympathisers with the pure-minded and so greatly imposed upon daughter of the Duc de Bourbon-Penthièvre, from whom the moralising Madame de Genlis even robbed the love of her children, can derive one cause of gratification. This is that, from the studied change in the tone of the correspondence after a time, the formality which replaces the expansions of passion, it is evident that, in spite of all her deception, which imposed for many years on the Duchesse, the intriguing Comtesse must have known herself to be found out, to have been seen through in high places.

Moreover, from the popular and satirical outcry against her at a time when with her pen she attacked the immorality of the *philosophes*, who had been her personal friends, and, above all, when she produced two strange little English girls at the Palais Royal, with queer, doubtful stories about their parentage, it would seem as if the contents of some of the letters had leaked out. From some of the clerks who had handled them, perhaps from some of the Royal family with whom Louis XV. had sneered at the Orléans branch, they may well have become known at the Court. Thus would be self-esteem and conceit of the excessively self-satisfied Madame de Genlis suffer, in spite of her outward assumption of a high moral standard. The knowledge that the evidence against her existed, in her own handwriting, may also account for the fact that

she studiously as a rule kept away from the Court at Versailles, that, moreover, she plainly shewed that she hated Queen Marie Antoinette, who might well have known the real facts concerning her illicit amours with the husband of a woman to whom she pretended to shew the most ardent devotion and friendship.

The intrigue and the letters together commence in July of the year 1772, when the Comtesse de Genlis was twenty-six years old and in the fullest bloom of her beauty. She then accompanied the Duc and Duchesse de Chartres, and two other ladies, to Forges, where the Duchesse was to undergo a cure at the baths. At Forges the young Prince and the lady-in-waiting found the opportunity for which they had been longing to indulge their reciprocal passion; but, after a fortnight of bliss they were compelled to tear themselves apart, his sister's illness calling Louis Philippe de Chartres to Paris. Then commenced the interchange of the amorous letters which were read by Louis XV. and others, no doubt greatly to their edification, before they reached their destination.

We can imagine how the clerks who did the copying must have laughed to find the brilliant young Comtesse, whose musical and literary attainments were so much talked about, calling the debauched Duc de Chartres " my baby " and " my child," or saying to him: " Oh! my love, I only love you; you are the only object of all my feelings, all my thoughts!" And the Comtesse had been supposed to have made a love match with her husband! The Prince also called the Comtesse *his* child, and one

can picture the sardonic grin upon the face of Louis XV., the peals of laughter of the merry du Barry, when they read together the views which he imparts to " his child " upon the subject of his unfortunate wife, now suffering from the toothache, for which she uses ether, the smell of which upsets " his child's " nerves and stomach. The husbandly expression of sympathy was couched in the following brutal terms. " I would like to hear from the Chevalier de Durfort to-morrow that all her jaw had been pulled out. And I would not even be sorry if her tongue went with it."

The Comte de Genlis is said to have been a gambler and also a libertine. If he gambled, he simply followed the prevailing fashion—gaming was the custom at the Court of even Louis XVI., who, with Marie Antoinette, when at Marly, played every evening and won and lost considerable sums of money, although the Queen's stakes were usually higher than those of the King.

With reference to the reputation of being " a gay dog " affected by Charles Alexis Brûlart, Comte de Genlis, and later Marquis de Sillery, he had his excuse when he found his wife out and that she did not care for him in the least—probably never had done so, but married him for his rank, money and expectations.

Living in the constant society of the dissolute Duc de Chartres, Genlis understood that Prince quite as easily as he fathomed his wife's designs. Had he, therefore, seen the letter written by Félicité, who was returning to Paris on the same day as himself from a mission on which he had been sent to get him

CHARLOTTE CORDAY
From a portrait by Brard

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out of the way, he would certainly not have been in the least surprised.

This good wife, who was coming back to the Palais Royal with her young mistress, wrote to warn the husband of that Princess, and said, while speaking of the Comte: " I shall, I think, contrive to get rid of him before half-past eleven on pretence of being over-fatigued. Come quietly, and if the door is shut, my child will wait, and picture to himself that beyond it is a heart as agitated and impatient as his own."

No wonder that one day later, when Paris was full of his wife's attack, in the name of religion, upon the *philosophes* and their great work, the " Encyclopédie," the Comte de Genlis gave way to a movement of impatience, exclaiming: " Oh! if you only knew how totally different she is in her real life to what she makes herself out to be!"

He was, nevertheless, a good husband, as husbands went in those days—was ready to share money with her when he had any, allowed her to do as she chose without making any outcry, and when she was living apart from him, as she usually was after the incident of the visit to Forges, made a point of calling upon her in the evening at a time when he knew that there would be other people present to see him in his wife's society.

For some twenty years, although the days of actual passion were over after a year or two, Madame de Genlis absolutely ruled the Prince, who succeeded his father as Duc d'Orléans in 1785. She had the brains and strength of purpose in which he was lacking, and he was as wax in her hands.

While taking the five children of the Duchesse to live with herself in a house built for her in the grounds of the Convent of Bellechasse in Paris, she educated them thoroughly in her own way, and gradually taught them to look upon her as their real mother. Of the three boys, the eldest of whom became King Louis Philippe in 1830, she was appointed by their father to the official post of "Governor," to the annoyance of Louis XVI. and the scandal and amusement of Paris and Versailles, the city being flooded with clever and *risqués* verses about "the woman who wore the breeches."

An equal scandal was caused when Félicité produced at the Palais Royal the two pretty and charming little girls above mentioned, who were brought from England, to one of whom she gave the name of Paméla Seymour, and to the other Hermine de X. Although she said that Paméla was the illegitimate daughter of an English girl called Sims, who was a washerwoman, and from whom she had bought her, and Hermine the natural daughter of a British officer, no one believed the Comtesse de Genlis. All declared that the girls were her own daughters by the Duc d'Orléans, born two years apart during her absences at Spa, and sent to England for some years to be out of the way through the friendly offices of an English officer and his wife whom she had met at Spa. These children were brought up by the Duc d'Orléans with his own, and with two daughters which the Comtesse had by her husband, at Bellechasse.

Subsequently the elder, Paméla, who was a beautiful girl, with the dark Orléans eyes, married

the Irish rebel, Lord Edward Fitzgerald, and had many adventures, which were by no means always conducive to her happiness. Fitzgerald poisoned himself in prison to avoid execution six years after he had married Paméla, who had three children, one born just after his death in 1799. Upon the occasion of her second marriage, Madame de Genlis behaved cruelly to this child, whom she had brought up as her own, first taking the Sacrament and then vowing to her, in the presence of various friends, that she was not the mother that she, in common with all of the Orléans family, supposed, and telling Paméla that she was nothing but a washerwoman's daughter after all. To this day, the facts of the parentage of Paméla and Hermine have never been unravelled; the real secret of their birth died with Philippe Égalité and Madame de Genlis. The Prince made a large allowance to Paméla, and travelled to Tournay in Belgium to be present at her marriage to Fitzgerald on 27th December, 1792. Paméla married Mr. Pitcairn, the American Consul at Hamburg, only a year after the death of her unfortunate first husband.

While continuing upon most intimate terms with the Prince, the affections of whose children, to the great grief of their mother, she had completely weaned from her, in order to stop the talk about herself, the Comtesse de Genlis induced the Duc d'Orléans to *afficher* himself publicly everywhere with the beautiful young Comtesse de Buffon, the daughter-in-law of the famous naturalist de Buffon, with whom Félicité was on friendly terms.

This was a feather-brained young lady, who was content to be the mere mistress of the Prince, and in

no way to interfere with the empire of Madame de Genlis, to whom, indeed, she came for advice upon every point.

The scandalous life led by the Duc d'Orléans at length compelled his virtuous wife, who had always loved him despite all his infidelities, to leave him and return to the protection of her father, the Duc de Bourbon-Penthièvre. She had for long proved herself most forbearing, even putting up with Madame de Buffon because she loved the Prince.

CHAPTER XXIX

MADAME DE GENLIS AN ÉMIGRÉE

As the time of the French Revolution drew nigh, Madame de Genlis, who had become Marquise de Sillery on the death of Puysieux, was very affluent owing to her husband's inheritance. What sums she obtained from the Duc d'Orléans is unknown, as openly she made a great parade of not accepting the very large salary attached to the position of Governor of the sons of the Prince. She was able to live in great style, and would appear to have had the use of one of two other houses in Paris in addition to the establishment of Bellechasse, where she educated together the children of the Duc d'Orléans, her own two girls, and Paméla and Hermine. She had placed her brother, in addition to her husband, in the Household of the Duc d'Orléans. This brother, the Marquis Charles Louis du Crest, was a very clever fellow, and as Chancellor to the Prince received a salary of a hundred thousand livres yearly, with a fine hôtel thrown in. While still very young, in fact only about fifteen, Pulchérie, the elder daughter of the Marquise de Sillery, was given by her to a brilliant

young officer of whom Madame de Montesson, who was greatly his senior, had made her lover upon the death of the old Duc d'Orléans. He was the Comte de Valence, and it was a shameful match under the circumstances, as Madame de Genlis-Sillery well knew. With reference to this title of Marquise de Sillery, since, as an authoress, its owner seems after the Revolution to have reverted to the cognomen of Madame de Genlis, we shall for convenience continue to speak of her by that name. Her aunt, the Marquise de Montesson, gave to her daughter and Valence the sum of a hundred thousand livres upon their marriage, and while Madame de Genlis procured for her daughter the post that she had originally held at the Palais Royal, she also made her son-in-law First Equerry to the Prince. As Madame de Genlis put other favourites also into the Household of the Palais Royal, it can easily be seen that while she affected to have withdrawn herself from the immediate *entourage* of the Prince known during the Revolution as Philippe Égalité, she really held him tied to her hand and foot by all her creatures who surrounded him.

Of these, perhaps the most important was her husband, with whom she kept upon an excellent understanding, for all who have studied the part played during the Revolution by the Duc d'Orléans cannot have failed to observe that his principal companion and confidant was the Marquis de Sillery, who eventually, like his master, lost his head on the guillotine.

Perhaps the most honest, as the most able, of those with whom Madame de Genlis had filled the Palais Royal was her versatile brother. Upon the

20th day of August, 1787, while various persons were already counselling Louis XVI. to summon the States General, the Marquis du Crest wrote a letter to the King to the effect that should he take that step it would prove the ruin of the State.

Charles Louis was laughed at when he asked the King to make him First Minister, while saying that he could save the State without any States General and without levying any more taxes. Living as he was in the home of the Orléans family, the King and Queen looked upon his counsels as eminently suspicious, and the advice of the Marquis du Crest was, therefore, treated with, more than disdain, derision. The unfortunate Louis XVI., guided in so many important matters by his wife, had the knack of rejecting good and following bad advice. He followed that of the father of Madame de Staël instead of that given by the brother of Madame de Genlis, and he and the Queen lost their heads in consequence.

As the time of the French Revolution approached, Madame de Genlis, who was never happy unless figuring in the public eye, affected the liberalism of the discontented party in France. Further, she led her princely paramour along the same road by which she was travelling herself. She had easy clay to work upon in the Duc d'Orléans, who had plenty of insults from the Court to complain of, as Marie Antoinette in particular never lost an opportunity of saying some cruel or cutting thing against him, or doing him an injury. Thus the Queen accused the Duc d'Orléans of cowardice after the sea-battle of Ushant, in which he had really behaved with marked bravery. She also deprived him of the position of

Admiral of France to which he should have been appointed in succession to his father-in-law.

While stirring the Prince up in his just resentment against the Court, Madame de Genlis educated his children to be Republicans in principle. She taught them the folly of titles, and merit of simplicity of life, since all men were born equal, and generally instilled into the young Princes principles by which they would be the more likely to become beloved of the populace, which loathed the extravagance and display of the Court at a time when thousands were starving for want of bread.

It was on account of this very hatred of the Court that the people turned with feelings of affection to the Duc d'Orléans, whom they knew to be detested at Versailles.

The Prince was immensely rich, and, by the advice of Madame de Genlis, he made a good use of his riches and became more popular still. The year 1788 and that which followed were times of awful calamity in France. In the former the harvest failed everywhere, and when the people were already starving there followed one of those terrible winters which have occasionally occurred, when the climate has seemed to revert to that of the Glacial Age. With nothing to eat, and the ground frozen too hard to bury the dead who had perished from starvation, the condition of the poor was too awful to imagine.

Then it was that the Duc d'Orléans opened his money bags wide, poured out his gold without stint, to succour those in distress, not only in Paris, but in all directions. The relief thus afforded was immense, but the Court looked askance at the Duc

d'Orléans, saying spitefully that all his liberality was with an ulterior object. A great part of the wealth of the Prince was also devoted to assist the raising of political clubs, one of which was the Breton Club, founded by Adrien Duport, which later became the ill-famed Jacobin Club. Two hundred thousand political pamphlets spread broadcast over France were said to be the work of Orléans, and doubtless they had been the result in great measure of the literary talent of the woman who still continued to be his Egeria.

The Court, in the meantime, continued to accuse the Prince of all the evils in the country. The terrible bands of starving ragamuffins who roamed all over France and were known as "the Brigands," were, for instance, said to be in his pay. While thus continually accusing the Duc d'Orléans of endeavouring to incite a Revolution which should leave him at the top of the tree at the expense of the Monarchy, the Court was, in fact, but in a most ill-advised manner ensuring the elevation of the Prince when that inevitable Revolution should really arrive.

When eventually the storm broke over the head of France, among the most active of those working in the interests of the Duc d'Orléans was the Marquis de Sillery. Then when, after the return of the King and Queen from their flight to Varennes, there was an immensely strong party in favour of deposing Louis XVI., the Duc d'Orléans had his opportunity.

Had he then but shewn a little boldness, to throw down the trump card in the game that he had been playing, he would have been made Regent of

France during the minority of the little Dauphin. He might even have become King and his eldest son, Louis Philippe, the pupil of Madame de Genlis, have succeeded him on the throne.

Just at this critical moment, however, Madame de Genlis failed to inspire the vacillating Prince with the strength of which he was himself lacking. By her advice, so it would seem, he did nothing, but let the opportunity slip through his fingers.

Why did his Egeria act thus? It is supposed merely from jealousy of a certain clever Engineer captain, named Laclos, in whom the Prince had lately placed his confidence.

This Captain Choderlor de Laclos was famous for the authorship of that amusing but frankly indecent novel "Le Chevalier de Faublas," which continues to be sold and read to this day, which is more than can be said for any of the works of his rival, Madame de Genlis.

An additional reason for this lady's opposition to the schemes of Laclos, which she helped to wreck although they tended to place the Duc d'Orléans so high, was her peculiar affection and jealousy for the interests of her young pupil, the Duc's eldest son. She saw that if the Dauphin were crowned and the Duc d'Orléans made Regent, there would be no chance for the seventeen year old Duc de Chartres to succeed to the throne, and the scheme of Laclos included this replacing of Louis XVI. by his son.

The young Duc de Chartres, who eventually reigned as Louis Philippe until deposed in the year 1848, was a youth of noble character who did credit to the teaching of his feminine Governor,

and, as he shewed by his conduct by fighting bravely in the army of the Republic, was perfectly willing to cast aside all the advantages of his birth, wealth and position. As he was becoming a man he fell passionately in love with his instructress. Indeed, Louis Philippe frankly owned to Victor Hugo after he had ascended the throne in 1830, that he never really loved any woman but Madame de Genlis. Although some writers have endeavoured to prove that this lady played the same part with the Orléans father and son that did that celebrated beauty Diane de Poitiers with François I. and Henri II., we can reject that supposition. On the contrary, according to the statement of Louis Philippe himself, when the experienced Madame de Genlis realised the feelings which he was barely commencing to understand himself, she treated him harshly and put him in his proper place as her pupil.

While her affection for the lad was great, there was much personal vanity mixed up with it; above all, she took peculiar pains to let the seething masses of Paris in a state of unrest know that, if the youthful Duc de Chartres was entirely in sympathy with them, she it was who had made him so.

The beautiful Paméla, to whom the Duc d'Orléans played such a fatherly part, although subsequently disowned as her child by his mistress, also took an active part during the earlier stages of the Revolution, and fostered the feelings of affection of the people towards Philippe Égalité. This the girl did, not by writing or addressing meetings, but by riding about among the turbulent throngs while

followed by a couple of grooms in the Orléans livery.

Paméla was lovely, and when she appeared, dressed in red, with a large hat decorated with feathers, the crowds went wild with enthusiasm. As the young beauty rode in among them, the people shouted themselves hoarse with applause, while crying out: " Here is the one we will have for our Queen."

Later we hear of Paméla, Madame de Genlis and her pupil Mademoiselle, as the Princesse Adélaïde d'Orléans was called, appearing together in public wearing the red caps of liberty, when all three ladies were alike warmly applauded by the mob. Thus, in the earlier part of the Revolutionary epoch the Comtesse de Genlis had her triumphs, she and her work were recognised by the Parisians before whom she posed.

Trouble ensued, however, with the unfortunate Duchesse d'Orléans, who might put up with the Comtesse de Buffon, but could not stand Madame de Genlis when, at length, she found her out. After naming the adultery of the Duc d'Orléans with this lady as a cause for demanding from the Courts a separation from her husband, the Duchesse made a violent attempt to recapture the affections of her children. When she found that they were dead to her, absolutely unresponsive while loving only the woman who had usurped a mother's place, the unhappy daughter of the Duc de Penthièvre nevertheless showed fight. The Duc de Chartres and his brother, the Duc de Montpensier, young as they were, had now gone off to join the Republican army under General Dumouriez, when the Duchesse

determined to recapture her youngest boy, the Duc de Beaujolais, and her surviving daughter, Adélaïde, whose sister had died some years previously of small-pox.

The Duchesse proceeded to the establishment at Bellechasse, and, in order not to allow the clever Governess of her daughter the chance to argue, read to her an order to cease her functions as Governess and to return her daughter to her keeping. As for Beaujolais, he also very soon joined the Army.

After a violent quarrel between the Duc d'Orléans and his wife, who refused to relent, Madame de Genlis now ran away to England with the young Princess and her—shall we say daughter?—Paméla. There she remained for some time in the house of Sheridan, who had become a widower, and soon fell in love with Paméla, who greatly resembled his dead wife, who had run away from him with Lord Edward Fitzgerald. This hero of the Irish Rebellion subsequently married Paméla owing to his being attracted by the same resemblance to Mrs. Sheridan.

In spite of the law against the *émigrés* being about to be passed, and despite the prayers of the Duc d'Orléans, the Comtesse and his daughter refused to return to France until it was too late. Then, upon landing at Calais, they found that their names, in spite of the efforts of Philippe Egalité, had been put on the list of the *émigrés*. Notwithstanding this misfortune, Madame de Genlis went straight to Paris, and in the house at Bellechasse formally resigned her position of Governess to Mademoiselle, her only idea being to get out of France, where the Prince was now evidently in danger from the plotting

of Robespierre, Marat, and the party of "The Mountain."

Philippe Égalité implored the woman who had been so much to him not to desert his daughter, and contriving to obtain provisional passports permitting them to leave France while their case was being considered, sent Madame de Genlis and Mademoiselle off at once to Tournay in Belgium. He repaired there himself for Paméla's first marriage, at which some reports say that he gave the girl away in the character of her father, then he left his daughter and the woman who had been so much to him, never to see them again.

Madame de Genlis with her charges soon joined the headquarters of General Dumouriez, with whom were the young Orléans Princes, who had retired before the Austrians from Holland into Belgium. Dumouriez was now plotting with the Austrian General Mack, acting on behalf of the Prince of Coburg, to join his French army to that of the Austrians. Their plan was to advance on Paris, and Louis XVI. having now been beheaded, to replace him on the throne, not by Philippe Égalité, who had voted for the King's death, but by his son, the Duc de Chartres.

In all these plottings Madame de Genlis took a hand, and she was present with Dumouriez when, as we have already related, he seized the Commissioners of the Convention sent to arrest him and packed them off as prisoners to the Austrians.

Directly after this, perceiving that Dumouriez' troops were about to rise in rebellion against the General and in favour of the National Convention, Madame de Genlis became wild with fear, and

sought to fly to some place in Europe safer than Belgium. There she was in danger of being arrested by the mutinous soldiers of Dumouriez, to be sent to Paris to lose her head. Her danger was indeed great, for in Paris the Duc d'Orléans was about to be arrested and guillotined for the crime of being an accessory to Dumouriez' action and treason to the Convention, while Sillery was to share his fate.

Fearing to become more compromised in Europe in arms by the presence in her company of Mademoiselle than she was already as the known mistress and adviser of Orléans, who had been guilty of regicide, Félicité de Genlis was now guilty of the meanest action of her life. Having procured a carriage, she attempted to fly from the house in which she was living near the Camp of Boues de St. Armand, and to leave the unsuspecting Princesse Adélaïde d'Orléans behind her—in bed! This cold-blooded plan was prevented by the astounded young Duc de Chartres, who, in his General's uniform, arrived at the door of the lodgings of the Comtesse as she was leaving early in the morning. She hurriedly endeavoured to say good-bye and to drive off, but he prevented her starting, rushed upstairs, tore his sister from her bed, threw a muslin gown over her, brought her downstairs in his arms and flung her into the carriage.

The trials and dangers of Mademoiselle, Madame de Genlis and her niece Henriette de Sercey, whom this lady was taking with her in her flight, were excessive. In addition to the narrowest escape from arrest on several occasions, Mademoiselle suffered fearfully from the cold in her thin muslin frock, and

became very ill with scarlet fever, which Henriette caught also.

In Switzerland they were hunted about from place to place, and soon were joined by the Duc de Chartres, who could not bring himself, like the *émigrés* nobles who joined the Austrians, to fight against France. The exiled aristocrats would not have had him among them anyway, so detested was the very name of Orléans by these Royalists.

We cannot follow the movements of the fugitives farther than to mention that after a time the Duc de Chartres went off alone in one direction, while Madame de Genlis, the Princesse Adélaïde, and Henriette de Sercey contrived to obtain shelter, nominally as three Irish ladies, in the Convent of St. Clare at Bremgarten in Switzerland. During their mutual misfortunes, the fatherless Mademoiselle was entirely without money. Madame de Genlis, who had but little wherewith to maintain herself and her niece in exile, advanced her, however, the sum of two hundred louis, which it is doubtful if she was ever repaid in full, although the Princess received one hundred and eighty louis from her relative, the Duke of Modena, while in the Convent of St. Clare.

From this place of temporary refuge the daughter of the Duc d'Orléans at length set out to join her great-aunt, the Princesse de Conti, at Fribourg, in Switzerland. Adélaïde showed the greatest grief in parting with the Governess who had been as a mother to her since she was a baby, that is to say, for nearly seventeen years. The separation is said, however, to have been the work of the Duc de Chartres. He had seen so much in the papers at the time of his father's trial of the disgraceful liaison which had

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existed between Philippe Égalité and Madame de Genlis, so much also of that lady's cruel treatment of his mother, that he could not forget the manner in which she had endeavoured to desert his sister at Boues de St. Armand. An intriguing woman, named Madame de Flahaut, who was a personal enemy of the Comtesse, and whom he met in a state of emigration, filled the young Prince up also with so many disgraceful stories concerning her life and behaviour that his old feelings towards his "Governor" changed completely. Although he was kindly disposed towards her when he eventually became King, in July, 1830, and gave her a Royal funeral as though she had been a Queen, Chartres remained partly estranged from Madame de Genlis for many years. His sister would seem, however, to have continued always to love the woman who had brought her up, and whom she was not to see again for ten years after she left her in the convent at Bremgarten.

After six more years of wanderings, in Germany, Holland, and Belgium, during which Madame de Genlis by the most wonderful industry contrived to earn a precarious livelihood by her pen, she picked up at Brussels her daughter Pulchérie. She had not seen the Comtesse de Valence for nine years when mother and daughter thus met again in the year 1800, and now together they made their way back to Paris, Napoleon, then First Consul, putting no opposition in the way of their return. On the contrary, he aided the unfortunate literary woman to live, employing her as a sort of a spy, by paying Madame de Genlis a salary to write him a fortnightly budget upon subjects of every description, not

omitting gossip as to what was being said and done by her neighbours in the city. It was in this manner, as we have seen, that this talented authoress, from feelings of jealousy, took care to enlighten the First Consul concerning the doings of Madame de Staël at Maffliers, and thus procured the hurried exit of that troublesome lady from France.

During the reigns of Louis XVIII. and his brother Charles X., that is to say, from 1814 to 1830, Madame de Genlis astonished the world by her prolific pen. The former of these two surviving brothers of the murdered Louis XVI. accorded her a pension when she wrote a bowdlerised edition of that immense work the "Encyclopédie," and thus avenged herself upon the *philosophes* with whom she had had so many and bitter quarrels in the past.

The Comtesse was at this period much appreciated in Paris, where, indeed, as a *grande dame* of the *ancien régime* in a city full of upstart people and a new nobility, she had become the fashion before Napoleon had assumed the Imperial Crown.

A list of the novels and other works published by the woman who had from girlhood led such a chequered career would fill several pages, but all interest in them died with her generation, when her books were most popular. Madame de Genlis died in Paris, practically with her pen in her hand, in her eighty-fifth year, when her former pupil, Louis Philippe, accorded her a magnificent State funeral, the Royal carriages taking part in the wonderful procession which escorted to her grave a literary

old lady who had once been Governor to the King.

The kindness of Louis Philippe to the woman for whom his calf love had been aroused went beyond giving her a grand funeral, for which he paid out of his own pocket.

He buried the Marquise de Sillery, Comtesse de Genlis, in the ancient aristocratic cemetery of Mont Valérien, as she had wished, although five days earlier he had promulgated a decree to the effect that no more interments were to be made at that place. The King likewise made several pensions to hangers on, semi-adopted children of the Comtesse, young people whom, with her craze for instruction, she had educated and started in life. Although the works of this distinguished lady are no longer read to-day, three of the historical novels that she wrote were of a high order of merit. These were "Mademoiselle de Clermont," " La Duchesse de La Vallière," and " Madame de Maintenon." Of these, the " La Vallière " became the most popular, from the fact that Napoleon found its pages so touching that they brought tears to his eyes, which fact becoming known, everyone rushed to buy the book, which went through edition after edition.

In her " Maintenon " Madame de Genlis followed the same methods as Madame de Staël, in that her heroine was herself. In the Marquise de Maintenon, the Governess of the natural children of Louis XIV., before she became first his mistress and then his wife, there was certainly a parallel to the career of the Governess Madame de Genlis, who, if she could but have got rid of the Duchesse

d'Orléans, would certainly have contrived to have made Philippe Égalité marry her.

There was another similarity in the career of Félicité de Genlis and that of her literary rival, the daughter of Necker, whom she survived for more than thirteen years. Both were courted by Talleyrand, to the extent that a liaison was suspected, although the Abbé, who became a Prince and married a courtesan (Madame Grant), was at least eight years younger than the Comtesse de Genlis.

Again, both Madame de Genlis and Madame de Staël were friends of the brothers of Napoleon, and both played an active part in the Revolution. As celebrities there was little to choose between them, but for charm of personality the palm must be accorded to the Comtesse de Genlis.

CHAPTER XXX

CHARLOTTE CORDAY

The most blood-thirsty wretch of the Revolutionary epoch in France was a yellow-skinned person of toad-like appearance, Dr. Jean Paul Marat. He had practised medicine in London and Edinburgh before coming to Paris to edit a sanguinary rag named " L'Ami du Peuple," and to obtain a seat in the National Convention among the members of the terrible party of " The Mountain."

Being from Neufchâtel, Marat was, like Pache, the Mayor of Paris, a Swiss, but none the less no more ardent " Patriot " was to be found among the representatives of the " Sovereign People."

While in his infamous journal Marat cried out daily for " blood—more blood," from his seat on the heights of the Mountain, with Robespierre and Danton, he screamed out his vile abuse against the party of the Gironde, which, bad as it was, having murdered Louis XVI., was now endeavouring somewhat to stay its hands from further slaughter.

Upon the 12th April, 1793, as President of the Jacobin Club, Marat issued an incendiary address,

which was, in fact, an appeal to the people to rise in arms against the Convention. In declaring that the Convention was " betraying the nation," and adding: " One must exterminate the traitors," Marat was endeavouring to arouse a civil war, having for object the destruction of the twenty-two Girondin members in the Assembly.

The Gironde was, however, bold; it proposed the arrest of Marat, who was imprisoned accordingly for one night only, but the Society of Jacobins, in collusion with Pache and the Commune of Paris, at the same time raised a monster petition against the twenty-two representatives whom Marat sought to destroy.

Brought before the bloody Revolutionary Tribunal, which was composed entirely of fanatical tools of Robespierre, the Court was surrounded by thousands of howling *sans culottes* screaming, " Death to the Gironde " and " We will not allow Marat to perish!"

As might have been expected, the yellow toad was immediately acquitted. He was, further, crowned with flowers, and carried in triumph into the Convention and half round Paris by his admirers (24th April, 1793). By the failure of their prosecution of Marat, the members of the Girondin party were now doomed indeed, and on the 2nd June, while an armed force surrounded the Convention, they were all voted to be placed under arrest in their houses by their enemies of the Mountain, headed by Marat. All of these twenty-two representatives, with some eight or ten other members of the Girondin party, including Roland and his wife, had now death staring them in the face.

Most of them, however, escaped from their houses and separated to different parts of France, the greater number contriving to re-assemble at Caen in Normandy. There they set about to raise an armed force to attack Paris and crush the Convention, now ruled merely by such popular tyrants as Marat, Robespierre and Danton. The former of these three had now contrived to abolish all remnant of free Government in France. Mob rule alone prevailed, and the Reign of Terror had commenced, the guillotine being kept busy shearing off human heads day after day, and from morning till night.

The attempt at rebellion in Caen amounted to nothing, and, after a space of time, most of the Girondin members who had escaped to that place and other parts of France came to a violent end.

Their death, of which Jean Paul Marat was the direct cause, was, however, to entail his own, although in his moment of triumph the rose-crowned yellow toad was, indeed, far from dreaming of such an unfortunate eventuality.

While, in Paris, he was continuing to cry out for the execution of more of the so-called "traitors," who were not being killed fast enough to please him, in the town of Caen was a young woman whose heart was wrung with the horrors which Marat had brought upon poor, unhappy France. If he could but be removed from the sphere of his evil activities, so it seemed to her, peace might ensue, blood might cease to flow in torrents.

She was a young lady, twenty-four years of age, and of singularly charming appearance and voice,

who had been born in the ranks of the *noblesse* but professed Republican principles. Her name was Marie Charlotte Corday d'Armont, but, since the abolition of all distinctive titles in France, was known simply as the *Citoyenne* Charlotte Corday.

During the long drawn out course of the Revolution there were many who, like Charlotte Corday, cried out: " Enough of bloodshed!" The historian Michelet observes of this cry, in his " Révolution Française ": " Magical word! infallible word! which one would have repaid in blessings. Who could have said it, without dying of it, would have been sure to reign. Danton tried it, and perished! Robespierre no doubt thought of it before the ninth of Thermidor. The chance which he waited for, to make himself the absolute master, was to be able one morning to guillotine the guillotine."

Whether he would have performed such a meritorious action or no could be but a matter of conjecture, since on the tenth of Thermidor (28th July, 1794) Robespierre was guillotined himself!

The only reign to which the handsome young lady at Caen aspired was a reign of peace—for others. For herself, Charlotte was perfectly prepared to die in the effort to stay the effusion of blood. She, however, kept her thoughts and intentions strictly to herself when daily meeting at Caen Pétion, Guadet or Barbaroux, escaped Girondin deputies.

When the drums beat for the proposed enrolment of the volunteers to serve in the Girondin cause, and when only some thirty-two young men assembled on a plain which could contain as many thousands,

Pétion, observing the sad expression on the face of the Citoyenne Corday, made fun of her: " What, are you afraid that your sweetheart is about to leave you? " Mademoiselle Corday had no sweetheart —she is said to have had one once, but the story needs confirmation.

Latterly she had left her father, who had taken a second, and young, wife, to live with an aunt, Madame de Bretteville. This lady found her one day in tears:

" Why do you weep, my child? "

" For France—for my relations—and you." The answer was enigmatic; her aunt did not understand it. Great thoughts were in the young girl's breast, thoughts for the real relief of her suffering fellow creatures. How different from the selfish calculations of a hypocritical Genlis, the idle vapourings of a screaming Staël! Her thoughts included that of the sacrifice of her own fresh, untarnished young life, that the lives of others might be spared!

Charlotte Corday was the greatest woman of the Revolutionary Era!—the greatest woman France has produced, even including the name of Joan of Arc, who gained riches, nobility for herself and family, during her short and brilliant career.

What had Charlotte to gain? No possible brilliant future awaited this young gentlewoman—nothing but a tomb, when she sallied forth alone from Caen to rid the world of a monster.

In the *diligence* or coach in which for a day and two nights she travelled to Paris were several men who admired Marat and Robespierre. They joked with the girl, made love to her, and she answered

lightly, with joke for joke. She had one book with her, "Plutarch's Lives." She read it in her idle hours in the hotel at which she descended in Paris —the Auberge de la Providence—where she arrived at five o'clock on the afternoon of the 11th July, 1793.

She went to bed at once, and next day went with a letter which she had obtained from Madame Roland's handsome friend, Barbaroux, for the deputy Duperret, concerning a friend's papers which she wished to have put in order at the Ministry of Interior. Barbaroux, we may here mention, escaped arrest for a whole year, but shot himself to avoid capture in the following July.

M. Duperret aided Charlotte, but he was himself "suspect" at the time, and therefore neither he nor his fair companion received any courtesy from the Minister, to whom they went together. Having parted from the amiable Duperret, Charlotte went to the Convention, wishing to see what Marat was like. He had not, however, taken his seat that day on the high seats dignified by the name of The Mountain, being at home indisposed.

She went next to a cutler's shop in the Arcades of the Palais Royal, and for the sum of forty sous bought herself a sharp sheath knife with an ebony handle. Only two francs! And yet with it the poor young lady cheerfully told herself that she had purchased the means of giving peace to France! From the Palais Royal she drives in a cab to the house of the yellow toad, No. 20, Rue des Cordeliers, for she is now anxious to meet Marat face to face without delay. His dwelling-place was also the publishing office of his newspaper,

over which he lived with a fair companion, Catherine Évrard by name.

Charlotte Corday could not obtain admittance to Marat, so went to her inn and wrote him a letter, asking for an interview, to which she received no answer.

On the 13th July, 1793, the determined young lady learned, to her disappointment, that the Anniversary Fête of the taking of the Bastille, which should have taken place on the morrow, had been abandoned. She had made up her mind that she would bring Marat to a tragic end amid the festivities of this celebration, no matter if she might herself be torn to pieces by the crowd.

Charlotte was not, however, to be baulked, and, therefore, writing another note to Marat, informing him that she could make him important revelations, drove with it to his house at 7 p.m. on that same thirteenth of July.

She did not send in the note, but reached the door of Marat's living apartments, and expostulated with Catherine Évrard when she tried to keep her out.

Marat was within, seated in a deep bath, steaming himself on account of his indisposition. He heard Charlotte's silvery tones, and wished to see the face of the woman from whom they proceeded. He therefore called out sharply to Catherine to admit the *citoyenne*.

Going in, Charlotte Corday found a hideous yellow man with a dirty sheet thrown over his shoulders. He was writing on a stool in front of his bath—apparently correcting proofs for " L'Ami du Peuple."

His mouth was remarkably toad-like, and around his greasy locks Marat had twisted a filthy napkin. Very different was the bright vision that stood before the bath. There was surely no reason why the suspicious Catherine should have attempted to keep out so fair and innocent-looking a visitor! Everything, on the contrary, spoke in her favour. Charlotte was decently attired, wearing the Norman bonnet with floating laces, and, against the custom of the day, which was for women to go with the bosom uncovered, was, in spite of the heat, draped with a long silk kerchief, which was fastened behind her waist. Her robe was white, her cheeks rosy and fresh—it was, indeed, a picture of innocent youth and health that the would-be slaughterer of half the world saw standing there so gracefully in front of his bath.

Quickly, he asked his visitor for the tidings of Normandy which she had promised in the letter which he had received. He sent Catherine from the room, and copied down as Charlotte gave them to him the names of the Girondin deputies who had taken refuge in Caen.

Then, with a chuckle of satisfaction, Marat exclaimed: " That's good! In a week they shall all go to the guillotine! "

If Charlotte had hesitated, these words decided her. In a moment she had whipped her knife out of her bosom, and driven it downwards to the hilt in the heart of the cruel wretch over whom she stood.

Marat made one cry: " A moi! ma cherè amie! To me! my dear friend!" As Catherine rushed in, he fell over—he was dead!

Charlotte Corday quietly withdrew to a window, and barricaded herself with a table and some chairs until the police arrived, and then surrendered herself quietly. She defended herself with the greatest composure at her trial, while owning her guilt. With perfect ease and grace, she subsequently permitted the painter Hauer to paint her picture, until the executioner came in, to cut off her hair and drive her to the guillotine attired in the red chemise of a murderess. Many wept as they saw Charlotte pass to her doom on the evening of the 19th July, 1793.

Before putting on the crimson garment which young Sanson, the executioner had brought her, and allowing him to shorten her hair, Charlotte borrowed his scissors. Cutting off one of her long tresses, she handed it to M. Hauer, the artist, who owed it to his rank as Major in the National Guard that he had been permitted to enter her prison to paint her portrait before she died. She had been chatting with him quite freely and unconcernedly, and now said, with a gentle smile: " This lock of my hair is all I have to offer you in return for all your trouble and kindness. Will you accept it, and keep it in memory of me? " Sanson, the gendarmes present, and M. Hauer were all deeply moved—the tears came to their eyes.

As subsequently the tumbril moved slowly along the crowded streets, with Charlotte seated therein serenely facing Sanson, there was little bitterness but much sympathy shewn to the lovely victim save alone by the lowest dregs of the people, the adherents of Marat. Even Montané, the judge who had tried her, had shewn her the same com-

passion as Chauveau-Lagarde, the counsel ordered officially to defend her, for which weakness Montané was to be imprisoned.

The mien of Charlotte Corday was most unconcerned. She had not lost her beautiful colour, and exhibited not the least sign of fear. Danton, Camille Desmoulins, and Robespierre, all three of whom were to die within the year, in the order named, noted her extreme placidity as she passed them standing in a group.

Firmly Charlotte walked up the steps of the guillotine, but when the executioner removed her scarf from her bosom she blushed deeply. In her offended modesty, Charlotte hurriedly then aided the men of death to place and bind her on the long board. She even apologised to Sanson for thinking that he meant to insult her when raising her skirt to bind her ankles.

Perfectly composed, she lies now with her head through " the little window." There is a click—the heavy axe falls—all is over with Charlotte Corday!

A brutal carpenter belonging to Marat's faction was assisting the executioner that day. He lifted the lovely head, and holding it up to the crowd, slapped it ferociously on the cheek.

A groan of horror arose from the onlookers. They may have been deceived by the ruddy glow of the setting sun, but all were convinced that they saw the face redden at the indignity of the blow. The carpenter was imprisoned to appease the spectators, and the " Chronique de Paris " had even the boldness to publish an article full of praise of Charlotte Corday.

An enthusiastic young foreigner from Mayence, Adam Lux by name, also published a pamphlet, in which he declared that he wished to die on a French scaffold in order to be enabled to rejoin the saintly girl beyond the grave.

They gave him his wish—Adam Lux was guillotined!

THE END

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